

# REFLECTIONS AND MEMORIES

*BY THE SAME AUTHOR*

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POEMS IN ONE VOLUME

A FACE IN CANDLELIGHT  
AND OTHER POEMS

COLLECTED PARODIES

TRICKS OF THE TRADE

THE GRUB STREET NIGHTS ENTERTAINMENTS  
OUTSIDE EDEN

# REFLECTIONS AND MEMORIES

BY

SIR JOHN SQUIRE



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WILLIAM HEINEMAN  
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To  
ROBERT LYND

*Olim Meminisse*

## PREFACE

OF these papers, short and long, some were introductions to *éditions de luxe* (notably that to Messrs. Macmillan's sumptuous *Marius the Epicurean*, illustrated with etchings by Mr. Thomas Mackenzie), some were prefaces to other people's books or anthologies by myself, and some have never before appeared in book form. I hope they have a kind of unity, in spite of the diversity of their subjects.

I thank Messrs. Macmillan, Heinemann, Secker, Herbert Jenkins, Cape, the Oxford University Press, Constable, Arrowsmith, and Longman for permission to reprint. The Johnson paper was read to the Johnson Club.

The Memoir to Henry Wheeler was prefaced to the Wadham College Catalogue, which I saw through the press after his death; that of John Freeman to his last poems; those on Flecker to his "Collected Poems," and Messrs. Heinemann's limited edition of *Hassan*; that of Julius West to his remarkable *History of the Chartist Movement*. "Women's Verse" preluded an Oxford anthology; the "Elizabethan Songs" a selection from them, published by Messrs. Herbert

## P R E F A C E

Jenkins, and the two bird essays books by Mr. Massingham and Mr. Hendy.

“A London Reverie” accompanied drawings by Joseph Pennell dug up years after his death, and beautifully produced by Messrs. Macmillan.

J. C. S.

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# MEMORIES OF YOUTH

## A LONDON REVERIE

*London twenty-five years ago. Joseph Pennell  
recorded it.*

THAT London, structurally, has in large measure disappeared. No doubt the majority of the buildings then standing are still standing. But many of the most central and significant edifices have been pulled down, and very few of the most central and significant thoroughfares have remained unaltered. Regent's Park is still intact, and Kensington Palace Green. Bedford Row, blessed legacy, is still unchanged; so, for all I know (or care), is Victoria Street, except for the recent alterations in the Army and Navy Stores. I see no change in Northumberland Avenue; two vile and soulless ranges suitably introduced by the dull Grand Hotel, which stands where Northumberland House once flaunted its lion. But Regent Street, Piccadilly, the Strand, Fleet Street, Oxford Street, Piccadilly Circus, Oxford Circus have all been substantially modified, some for the worse, some for the better. Waterloo Bridge, centre of the finest vista in London, is doomed after years of crutches. Devonshire House, not externally a beautiful building,

but quiet, homely, surrounded by gravelled space, and guarded by the finest pieces of weathered Portland stone extant, fell yesterday. It gave place to a building which might have been the legitimate glory of Dayton, Ohio, or Memphis, Tennessee. Yesterday, also, fell Grosvenor House, a rather ugly building, apart from its screen on the side street, but one not dwarfing the lovely little balconied and bow-fronted Regency rows which made Park Lane (the rich in smallish houses, aristocracy temperately putting on a show of domesticity over the trees and the pastoral expanse) the pleasantest thing in London, for all the roar of buses under its windows. A great squat block of flats has gone up in its place, with a touch of good taste and restraint about it which only makes its offence more noticeable. Dorchester House, that impressive Italianate palace, with its Alfred Stevens mantelpiece, has been dismantled and replaced by a structure that looks like cardboard and paint. "Wail, Park Lane: Wail, Mount Street," as William Blake might have said in one of his Prophetic Books. The transformation, though still local, is as noticeable as a gap in a man's front teeth. There are no great monuments of architecture in Park Lane, and no buildings so sacred because of their associations that people will feel obliged to agitate for their preservation. It was merely a pleasant back-scene over the Park, with an atmosphere of *rus in urbe* and *urbs in rure*.

Its integrity has gone; buildings have been erected which stand amid the others like Gullivers among the Lilliputians; there is no longer any proportion there and the rest may as well be destroyed. An agreeable rank of private houses will have disappeared, which gave a sense of privacy to the loafers in the Park as well as to the Croesuses who inhabited them; instead we shall have a pile of expensive blocks of flats, ephemerally tenanted by "the Argentine, the Portugee, and the Greek," which may be frigidly dignified but will have little that is peculiarly Londonish about them. The old Park Lane could never have existed in any other city than London, though its less impressive kinsmen might be found in corners of Brighton or Cheltenham. The new, at best, will merely be a discreet version of Park Avenue, New York, a slightly more Anglo-Saxon sister of streets in the neighbourhood of the Bois de Boulogne, a rather less blatant analogue to the grandest boulevards of Charlottenburg. Park Lane is in process of evanishment; and the old walls of the Bank of England have fallen in clouds of dust. The old Empire Theatre (which was certainly ugly but was unpretentious and of its epoch) has gone, whilst the disconsolate statue of Shakespeare broods over the vacancy; and Exeter Hall, preserved in Pennell's line, has also gone. Architectural treasures these certainly were not, and each of them had unpleasing associations, though of widely



differing kinds; but the brave show that each tried to make was of a kind that must now appear to us pathetically modest; they were immolated, as much more will be immolated, on the altar of the Big, the Broad, and the Cosmopolitan.

Many of Pennell's drawings are records of streets and edifices that no longer exist. Not only the physical appearance has passed. Twenty years in any era will bring a change: these twenty years, owing to the interposition of the War, have brought a greater change than most. This was the pre-War world. Examine Pennell's pictures, and you will find not merely buildings that have disappeared, but modes of costume and transport which have gone, never to return.

It is the world of the early nineteen-hundreds. It is a time before the jolly vulgarity of Earl's Court had leap-frogged westward to the White City, and then to Wembley, now in its turn deserted. I cannot find the exact year (if the drawings do all date from any one year), because I can never recall the precise dates and sequences of women's sleeves and hats. There was (but this was certainly much earlier) the leg-of-mutton sleeve, the most repulsive and abnormal distortion to which the slaves of fashion had subjected themselves since the days of Queen Elizabeth, wiggish extravagances being excepted. There were the sleeves that had a hunch above the shoulders, the sleeves

that ballooned below the shoulder and were then tight, the sleeves that were tight all the way down until they came to a widening at the wrist. Skirts were always long, and had to be held up, gracefully or awkwardly; hats were usually large, either towering like wedding-cakes or undulant and plummy like the hat of Gainsborough's Duchess. In the country, yokels were still sitting on the benches outside village inns and drinking the healths of General French and (in the west of England) General Buller. In London, dominated by the bonhomie of Le Roi Édouard VII, the Man about Town, silk-hatted, full-moustached, gardenia'd, still decorated Pall Mall; and the "Johnny," whose popular name was also "Algy," leant, fair-haired, high-foreheaded, monocled, spruce, on the Criterion bar, or took the chorus out to supper. The traffic, commerce apart, consisted of horse-buses—the Monster, the Royal Blue, the Fulham White, and so on—and jingling leisurely hansoms. A dozen or so of these still remain amongst us, almost as odd as sedan-chairs. Now and then some sentimentalist, having a quarter of an hour free, will take one of them, and recover, with a twinge of the heart, the sensations of his youth. In those days, beyond all things, they were fleet. There were the buses; there were the four-wheelers; but the hansoms were the Atalantas. These poor jog-trotting survivals (as we think them) seemed then to be prodigies of perfect springing, elimination

of friction, balance, comfort and speed. We had hardly started (the horse's feet clumping merrily, the wood-and-glass apron-doors shut cosily, the body jiggling with the resilience of an air-cushion, the bells ringing), than we drew up before the dim-lit portico, sprang out to assist our whitely voluminous be-bow'd lady to alight, rang a bell or watched a latch-key turning, shook a reluctant parting hand, heard a door bang, and trotted off again into the empty dim-lit streets. A hansom now! I take one sometimes; I wonder if any of my readers do! It is thrilling to get in, thrilling to jog alone with the horse's back and ears in front, and the animal steam rising; thrilling to hear the jingle, the creak of harness, to see the shafts wobbling in the harness, to be aware of that tough old man on the box behind and above the dark compartment, who suddenly will slacken his horse's pace, lift the little high shutter, and ask for a specific direction. But what crawling, what miscalculation of times! Everything passes us, our lamps are faint to the point of exhaustion, our driver is a withered survival; the jolting is fatiguing. All is tolerable merely as an anachronism that stimulates the memory.

The motor-car, though rare, existed; there were even motor-buses: the "Arrow," the "Pioneer," and such, which frequently broke down and left their passengers in the lurch, thereby indicating that the new age, which was trying to arrive, had not yet

arrived. Otherwise means of transport were still Victorian, Dickensian even. And the social and political structure were survivals also. In the year 1900 there was a great discussion as to whether the nineteenth century had begun in that year or was to begin the next; the Kaiser, who was incapable of understanding that there never had been a year O, characteristically pronouncing in favour of 1900. In point of fact, the twentieth century began in 1914 if we are to consider centuries as eras. Much, no doubt, had gone which had been in evidence during Victoria's prime. Dukes no longer wore their garters, nor rustics their smocks; hatchments were no longer displayed outside houses of death, though tan or straw was still laid outside houses of sickness, and hearses were still cornered by the panoply of plumes. Yet every line regiment had its scarlet uniform and peculiar facings. The King's cousins were still encumbered by German names, Schleswig-Holstein, Battenberg, and Teck; and they seemed very thick on the ground.

In 1905 Mr. Balfour was Prime Minister; Mr. George Wyndham, young and handsome, was getting into trouble about Ireland; Mr. Alfred Lyttelton, not long since an England cricketer, was in trouble about Chinese indentured labour meant to work the mines in the newly conquered Transvaal, the Union of South Africa and the Dutchmen's Revenge not having been thought of. The social and imperial organisations

which Disraeli had known were still intact. The debates of the House of Lords were still followed with close interest, not to mention those of the House of Commons. A Peer might be Prime Minister; Lord Salisbury had only recently left office. None of the Victorian political threads had yet been followed to the middle of the maze. The destruction, by taxation, of the squirearchy had been merely begun; Home Rule was still being argued in relation to the incidence of taxation and the precise number of Murphys and O'Connors who were to represent Cork and Limerick at Westminster; the Welsh were agitating for Disestablishment; a small minority of the adult population was on the electoral roll; the "latch-key" voter was an object of keen controversy; and the women, content with the prospect of a municipal vote as widow-householders, had not begun that campaign of burning, whipping, and picture-slashing which was finally to prove to both Front Benches their eligibility for the franchise. The Coaching Club was going strong; no American had as yet successfully invaded Wimbledon; the ragged and bare-footed urchins of Barnardo's advertisements still infested the doorsteps of the slums.

Thus, apparently, it was going on "from precedent to precedent." Ireland would always be a source of trouble, but it was an agreeable place to hunt in. Babus would get ideas into their heads, but the

Mutiny had taught its lesson and the redcoats had the situation well in hand, except for the perennial sharp-shooting on the North-West Frontier. A clever public-school boy could not do much better than enter the Indian Civil Service at the age of twenty-three, govern half a kingdom, and retire, still young, with a pension of a thousand a year, which in those days, and with those prices and taxes, meant luxury. We had the trouble with the French at Fashoda, but Édouard le Bien-Aimé was the adored of the boulevards, and all was well. The Russians had been momentarily dangerous, but the young Czar had shown idealism with his peace-rescript, he might be trusted gradually to liberalise the country (undeterred by the bombs of the Nihilists), and the cut of his features and of his beard made him extraordinarily like the Prince of Wales. Russia was well on the way to taking its full share in the civilisation of Western Europe, backward though the moujiks undoubtedly were. The volatile German Emperor, with his flashing eyes and upturned moustaches, was doubtless magniloquent and bombastic, and did talk a little too much about his new toy, the German Navy, a thing that Germany could not possibly need; yet he always appeared, and friendlily smiled, on occasions of family grief or rejoicing, a gallant figure on his proud charger, in processions. Change was ahead of us. The aged and side-whiskered Franz Josef must

some day die, and then "the Break-up of the Dual Monarchy" would, in some mysterious but innocuous way, take place. The Sick Man of Europe was also indeterminately doomed. China, too, might break up. But all was for the best; the clouds were no bigger than a man's hand; never did we think of aeroplanes over cities, tanks, poison-gas, thousand of miles of trenches, four years of war, many millions dead, the crashings of thrones, the obliteration of the old map of Europe. It was the calm before the storm; and its storms were storms in a teacup of Wedgwood. There was no international menace that might not be removed by a Lord Mayor's banquet preceded by a blaring procession to the Guildhall—the Czar, the Kaiser, the French President, the Shah of Persia, the King of Siam, they were all one to the cheerful Cockney populace, and were all heartily cheered.

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London was then as it is now, unique among capitals: concentrating so many functions, being the seat of so many activities. It is the seat of the Court and of the Government and Parliament; it is the unchallengeable centre of social life; it is the headquarters of all the learned professions; it is an immense manufacturing society; it is the financial centre of the Empire; it is Britain's greatest port. A man may possibly regret the agglomeration of so many energies

and so many populations. In Germany the old capitals still retain some importance; the publishers, for example, of Munich vie with those of Berlin. Paris is not a port, and New York is not the seat of Government; Edinburgh and Glasgow have different characters. A pity, it may arguably be, that the kings of England and their Parliaments did not choose to remain at Oxford or Winchester or even Reading, relieving London of part of its present congestion. There are those who hate all cities so large that an hour's walk cannot bring you to the edge of them. Cobbett, who invariably called London "the Wen," was one of them: he believed in grass, corn, oats, fresh air, and enlightened feudalism. William Morris was another. He wrote:

Forget six counties overhung with smoke,  
 Forget the snorting steam and piston-stroke,  
 And dream of London, small and white and clean,  
 The clear Thames bordered by its gardens  
 green. . . .

These men were sorry for what had happened; yet were they also sorry that it had happened to London. Mr. Chesterton once said that the statement "my aunt has tremendously changed" was a positive affirmation that she was still "my aunt." "Dream of London," Morris still had to say when he was thinking of abolishing modern London; and Cobbett, for all his hatred of the creeping scrofula of the houses on



the outskirts, would, if pressed (like the patriot and poet that he was), have made many exceptions in favour of institutions and buildings that he knew. He may have seen (if they were there in his day) the shining and stalwart sentries on their black steeds outside the Horse Guards; he may have leisurely floated down the Thames for a fish dinner at the Ship Greenwich. No man who has once lived in London wandered about it, examined its nooks and crannies entered into its variegated and richly traditional life could honestly say that he wished it all wiped out even if he shared Cobbett's and Morris's views about industrialism, paper money, and the decay of rural England. There would be many things that he could not bear to destroy. And for every man there would be different things; the place, the city, the congeries of history being so vast.

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How vast it is! I, who have lived in London for twenty-five years and constantly explored it out of curiosity, suddenly check myself and realise what great lacunæ there are in my knowledge of it. My map of London contains as many blank spaces as did the map of Africa in Mungo Park's day. It is perfectly true that I know the centre of London (though there are still streets between Piccadilly and Oxford Street into which I have strayed once or never at all, and which

may contain the oddest and most charming unknown things), and that I have visited most of the hidden Churches of the City. It is true that the East Central district has few secrets which I do not share: that I know the Adelphi Arches, that I have paused in Neville's Court hundreds of times, that I have visited the Roman Bath off the Strand, that I have lunched at the George and Vulture, and penetrated the Crypt of St. Mary-le-Bow. It is true that I know Chelsea, Kensington, Hammersmith, Chiswick, and Kew on the west, and have explored the environs of Gunnersbury Park. It is true that I have taken my pleasure in the Georgian fronts of the North Side, Clapham Common, and of Church Row, Hampstead; that I have walked through the Blackwall Tunnel and slept in a slum at Walworth. I know Southwark Cathedral and the lovely inn-yard which adjoins it; the Inns of Court, every court of every inn; the library of St. Paul's, the cellars of the Bank, most of the panelled rooms and Samuel Scotts of the City Companies. I have been in Barking Church and Tottenham Churchyard; I am familiar with Gilbert Scott's magnificent new church at Northfleet, and with Rahere's; with the Minories, the environs of the Tower, the whole length of Little Thames Street, and more than one old riverside public-house at Wapping. I have watched the deer cantering at Richmond, and the masts spiring over the houses on both banks of the River in

the east. I am acquainted with Dirty Dick's, the Hole in the Wall, the Soane Museum, the Dulwich Gallery, Browning Hall, and Ruskin Park; with the new road to Sidcup and the new cut to Esher; and with most of the main roads by which a motor-car can pass out of London into England, wild nature, and the established past. Yet, if I look at a map, I find myself immediately confronted with wide districts of which I know only the names, and perhaps a few historical associations. Edmonton and Ware: they occur in *John Gilpin*, and they have apparently grown enormously; what remains of antiquity there may be in them, what relics of Gilpin's and Cowper's day, what new creations of modern art, what passions of local patriotism, I know not, nor even, very accurately, where these places are. "Walthamstow" and "Ilford": on Election nights I have waited long to see the figures for these celebrated boroughs of outer London thrown upon the screen, and have cheered or groaned according to the results; but as to their configuration I know no more than Sir Thomas Browne knew about the songs the Sirens sang, and the name that Achilles took when he was in Scyros, amongst the women. Willesden Junction I know, but not the Willesden; Brondesbury as a station on the railway, but not as the possible site for a story by Mr. Chesterton; of Highgate I can only recall the Church spire, the Archway, the Archway Tavern, and a neighbouring book-

shop; of Hackney I know nothing; and there, to the North-East and South-East, my imagination travels into regions of which I can "picture" only small isolated spots. With at least half London I am totally unacquainted; and I am not less curious than most.

Every Londoner-born, every provincial who comes to live in London, has his own London. For no two individuals, probably, is this unconscious selection the same: there is a London for every man in London. London is almost "as large as life." There are probably tens of thousands of Jews in Whitechapel who have never seen, or heard of, Portland Place; there are certainly many people in Portland Place who have vaguely heard of Whitechapel, but only as an outlying territory, like the Andamans or the Solomon Islands, which has to be administered, and may, at any moment, be liable to give trouble. There is a London of the Unthinking Rich: bounded on the east by the Savoy and on the west by Kensington High Street. There is a London of the Colonial, a congeries of great hotels and famous "sights." There is a London of the stupid American, and a London of the cultivated American, who goes far and wide in search of a background with which his own country does not yet provide him. There is a London of the Chelseaite and the Bloomsburyite; there is a London frequented and beloved by Mr. W. W. Jacobs and Mr. H. M. Tomlinson, and intimately known by Conrad,

which begins at Tower Hill and goes eastwards; a marine London, a London of docks, and spars, returned and battered ships, crimps and Chinamen, merchandise and anecdotes from the Seven Seas, tea-chests, bales and anchors, the smells of salt, tar, bilge-water and river mud. A man knows and loves Acton, but hardly knows where Tottenham is; a man regards Streatham as the secondary centre of the universe, the City being its only superior; a man lives in Tooting, and finds it difficult to believe that Finchley, with its glitter of trams and shops, exists. Yet for all of them, however widely London may spread, however discrete its parts may become, there is a general awareness of London, and there is a central and nodal part of London which they regard as common property, symptomatic and symbolical of the whole chaotic and magnificent business. In exile they feel it acutely. Wherever the Londoner abroad comes from, it isn't the Balham Town Hall or the Forest Hill Waterworks that most arouses his emotion. After the Union Jack it is Trafalgar Square, or Piccadilly, or Saint Paul's. It is even possible to imagine a group of British exiles, in the middle of the Gobi Desert, giving (were a sudden picture or wireless message to be encountered) three cheers for the British Museum. London is a hotch-potch, but it still has a heart and a soul. Even the most sprawling octopus has organs.

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They very seldom pull down anything ugly in London. When they do, as in the Strand, old shoddy is usually replaced by new. Yet, whatever disappears, men will, as time goes by, regret it; and what had not even the humblest grace of form will take in memory a presence, a bloom, a luminosity from that vanished youth with which it was associated. There are men of my generation who, at this moment, when that flimsy and dingy little restaurant of Appenrodt's has just been demolished, will merely remark that it is an ugly obstruction and ought to go in the interests both of traffic and the eye; yet who, when it has gone, will feel, if it be casually mentioned, the pang it cannot give them now. Life is a tissue of farewells, and every change is a reminder of it; but here, in the death of such a building, is a symbol of a death which even in life we have experienced, our own death which we have survived, the death of our youth. Before the century is out there will be greybeards to whom the Bush Building will be a part of the old London they first knew—what the County Fire Office, with its arcade and its Britannia, was to us. To-day it is too new to have become firmly part of anyone's fabric of retrospect. Its site for some is haunted by the phantom of an old maze of streets: Holywell Street and Booksellers' Row, streets dark with the shadows of seventeenth-century gables and littered with books, fruit, and "old junk." To others that great white recti-

linear block stands upon an empty triangle of waste, where for years no foot trod behind the palings, and the rubble-covered earth was clothed with sparse grass, and then, invisible seeds coming one by one on the invisible wind, a tangle of vagrant weeds grew there, a garden for untidy Nature in the heart of the smoke and the bricks, *Flora Londiniensis* reconstituted—fifty sorts of flowers, with pink swathes of the rose-bay willow-herb spiring over all. Demolition and “improvements” are incessant in London. Every hour old beams, newly naked to the sky, are battered down in pathetic ruin, a fresh gap is opened in one of our ten thousand streets, foundations are dug, bricks are laid, new signs stuck up. Every year the fringes of London extend: what was a placid country house yesterday is a grimy building plot to-day. London is in perpetual flux. Yet, in retrospect, it is not a shifting background one sees, but a fixed one, mysteriously arrested at some moment and seeming to have been immutable for years: a picture which, for all one knows, may include things which actually were never co-existent in time, one façade falling before another was built.

This London that has gone, though relics of it surround us on every side, saw our youth and was a part of our youth, our youth that is a country which is lost. There are other provinces, and for no two persons is that whole country the same. For me,

inhabited for an epoch of childhood, there were the blue seas, shell-covered beaches, fishermen's churches at evenfall with the wind howling outside, and "Through the Night of Doubt and Sorrow" filling the nave bright with hanging oil-lamps—the streets of a garrison town with every other promenader a blue-jacket or a soldier in scarlet with a swagger cane—farms, weather-slated, with little front gardens full of Canterbury-bells, sweet-williams, stocks, with flat-faced flame-petalled sunflowers guarding the wall, and borders edged with low box, or button-daisies, or the white of arabis and the yellow of calceolaria, and orchards behind, where gnarled grey trunks stood in long grass—wet boulder-scattered slopes of sunlit Dartmoor, the crested tors standing silently round, and two boys with small rods mounting past patches of heather, tufted rushes, and whortleberry clumps with their purple bloom-pallid berries hidden under bushy leaves, from pool to pool of a streamlet's noisy descent, crouching with thrilled hearts to entice the trout, trout that were so brownny-bright, so spotted, and flapped so noisily in the basket when they ought to have been dead. How ample a province! What market squares full of gaitered farmers, traps, and cattle! what thatched and pink-washed cottages! what cobbled streets straggling down to little harbours where the fishing-boats were beached and the quays stank at low tide of fish and marine slime, and the mud



was strewn with half-buried tins, crockery, chains, and rusty flukes of forgotten anchors! What drives at night between hedges, with the horse's feet clapping and rings of light from the square lamps hovering along the broken gathering darkness at each side! Days—no, not days, for the divisions of days are forgotten—of climbing, sailing, swimming, picnicking, games in empty houses, or candles and books in bed at night, the creak of footsteps on the stairs. A great organ, like a painted Giant's Causeway, thundering in the Guildhall, while the massed choir (ladies all in white, sopranos with red sashes, contraltos with blue) sang choruses of the *Messiah*. Racks in railway carriages and the notices under them, "Five Seats" laboriously altered by a wag into "Five Cats." The Salvation Army bands lugubriously braying in the empty streets, or suddenly encountered, marching, with a rabble behind them, round a corner. Dim Queen Victoria's first Jubilee and the unveiling of a monument; a golden tip from a strange gentleman whose head was high out of sight. A wain of red clover in the dusk of an archway; runnels of water threading the star-patterns on the yellow bricks of a stable-yard; horses in loose boxes; a dog that lost its puppies; a water-ford with the wheels axle-deep, the ragged pinnacle of a ruined castle emerging from steep woods; air-gun practice in a shed; a warm chaffinch, stone-dead, its ruddy breast so smooth,

its white-barred wings lifted to find the bloody hole; a stab of remorse. A heavy dirty-jacketed rook, dead in a furrow, dingy black, maggoty when it was turned. Daisy chains, ripe apples from the tree, bird's-foot trefoil (that is a lotus), wet red moss-rose. Scented coffee grinding in one window, waxen barbers' busts in the next, the beauty of an ironmonger's and a corn-chandler's, the little sailor-suited figures in a tailor's window, cheese, oranges, the desiccated rings of grocers' apples. Thus will the endless chain of association draw bright images from that inexhaustible well.

Then older days at school, and an imperceptible frontier had been crossed, never to be traversed again. At a certain time childhood was behind and we were shamed of ever having been children, unlearned, undisciplined simpletons, silly little fools and asses. To evade the opprobrium we put the past out of mind, and, if it had to be recalled, exaggerated a few years into "long ago." It seemed long ago perhaps, for time moved so slowly then; and it was truly "far away," if not "long ago"; for the first sharpness of impression had gone, the senses had reaped their main harvest and had but gleaning to do henceforth, and the dawn of generalisation had set in, though information about the world and other men's notions was very scanty. Childhood had given place to first youth; we had learned to curb our

suffering; but no shock-absorber, alas, was needed to mitigate the force of the assaults of beauty and of fact. It was in childhood that we apprehended, with awed delight, the heavenly bodies, the seasons and weather, earth, sea and sky, the kinds of people and of animals, flowers and trees, and received most sharply the treasures of sight, sound, scent, taste and touch. Mr. W. H. Davies has written:

I saw this day sweet flowers grow thick—  
But not one like the child did pick.

A hundred butterflies saw I—  
But not one like the child saw fly.

I saw the horses roll in grass—  
But no horse like the child saw pass.

My world this day has lovely been—  
But not like what the child has seen.

That is not sentimentality: it is truth. Every category of impressions came to us in childhood with a vividness and poignancy not to be recovered: the new sensations of later life are but pale supplements and extensions of these, and our mere memories of these are stronger than anything we can receive from the actual presence of their successors. We may "admire" and be touched to melancholy or reverence by a sunset, gorgeous or soft; but our feelings are but faint reflections of those which we experienced when the first great sunsets were unfolded for our virgin

souls. It was then that we learnt the solitude of the hills and the sweet companionship of the rivers, the wonder of wide primroses in the woods and hard blackberries in the brakes, looked first at trout lying in a bridge's shadow, drank through our nostrils the strange empty savour of river water as we swam. It was then that with intensest pleasure we watched the rooster crow from his dunghill, fed from our fingers the sucking calf, patted the bristly hide of the lazy sow. It was then we learnt how hot the sun can bake great stones by the sea, and how rapidly on such hot stones the wet stamp of a bathing dress will dry; that we tasted with irrecoverable sharpness the aromatic mustard of nasturtium seeds, and felt the strong, tight, flexible armour of the seeds of the sunflower; saw glow-worms, green glimmers in June's dark scented lanes; drank in the intense blue of the thrush's eggs, the pure white of the pigeon's, the stippled rusty streaks of the robin's, the fragility of broken shells on the ground, the gape of small birds' beaks in the nest; were awed by the sounds, at night, of the breaking sea and the wailing wind, the waving trees and the tu-whooping owls; listened, with acutest ears, in autumn twilights, to church bells miles away, now loud, now almost inaudible, and heard only the chime, never thinking of ringers or belfry; and on a night of fire, saw vast puffs of sparks, yellow and red, drift across dark-blue sky with a delight we had

known also when the last golden husk had slid back and revealed, seated high, dazzling, with a star-pointed sceptre, the fairy at the heart of a Transformation Scene.

That capacity for complete reception, complete delight, complete self-forgetfulness, departed with childhood; later youth, at school and at Cambridge, brought its treasures of scene and society; and, for me, at least, London does not enter into that part of the tapestry where youth was passing through its second transition, dipping at random into the various worlds of books, aware for the first time of the rumour of conflicting ideas, newly acquainted with the names of the great ones of the world, serenely supercilious about them, but undeniably shy when any of them physically appeared. To others, born and bred in London, the place must mean things it can never mean to me. My own first sight of it was when I was eighteen, steaming eternally into Paddington on a cold, damp, gloomy December day, with something like terror closing in on me at the magnitude of the thing and its legend—a feeling that always returns when there comes to my nostrils the sharp coppery reek of a great railway terminus. That terror no man or woman bred in London can have known. As we sped in through the ever-increasing density, until we slowed down under the smoke-blackened cliffs outside the great cavern of Paddington, my heart

stood still and I trembled. I tried to laugh at myself and could not; and dismounted with awe. The horror wore off: the unfamiliarity remained, all the time I was at Cambridge and for two years after. There were occasional week-ends and three or four weeks. I knew the environs of St. Pancras and Queen's Club (staying in a lodging near this last, and a boarding-house, full of young Indians and indeterminate elderly ladies, in Woburn Place?—Square?—Terrace?), and a few houses in the West of London and the suburbs. The City I knew but as something strange, almost mythical, full of narrow streets, traffic, classic porticoes, and unexpected sooty churches, that one passed through on the way to Liverpool Street. When, in search of some friend, I took a hansom to Kensington or, with very strict attention to my instructions about trains, went out to sup near Clapham Common or the Crystal Palace, I knew no more about the wildernesses of houses I travelled through or over than I do now about the dismal wastes of Pittsburg. Once or twice I passed the Abbey on buses and disliked the towers; occasionally I passed St. Paul's and wondered if I should ever climb the Dome for the view. I did not know the names of most of the buildings I saw: the streets, except for Piccadilly, the Strand, and a few more, were all one. In my first year at Cambridge I even had the idea that New Oxford Street and Holborn were of a peculiarly

metropolitan importance. London, shorn of its original awe, was a shapeless and featureless thing of unknown size, a body without a soul, that meant nothing to me. On occasional visits one might travel to Queen's Club for the Rugby match and spend the evening with haphazard undergraduates drinking new liqueurs in foreign restaurants; or go to the theatre; gradually increasing one's knowledge of the stations on the Inner Circle, and learning to distinguish between Hyde Park Corner and Marble Arch. But London as a whole was as yet virgin of associations, either personal or historical. I shall never forget, but can never clearly remember, the first true inkling I had of its size. In 1907 I walked from Devonshire to London, taking a holiday from employment on a local newspaper, in the guise of a penniless tramp, sleeping in haystacks (a rat ran across my face in the dark), pheasant-copses (the rain dripping all night, the pheasants chuckling), and Casual Wards. I broke the journey at Oxford, shaved and borrowed clothes, spent several agreeable days, punted on the Cher, talked to a Rhodes scholar about Petronius, played a good deal of billiards, first encountered Father Ronald Knox in his infant glory and a red tie, acquired the fare to Reading, and, resuming the bedraggled mackintosh and the tieless collar, left the disgusted porter of Balliol behind me.

One night I slept in Balliol College, the next in

Isleworth Casual Ward: I take it, an unusual colloca-  
 tion. I had walked from Maidenhead to Isleworth  
 on a damp Saturday afternoon in May, and reached  
 the workhouse when the lights were already being lit.  
 My pockets were turned out according to the usual  
 ritual; I informed the grim official in charge that I  
 was a "clurk," and I waited my turn for the bath.  
 Whilst I was undressing a tough customer with  
 cunning eyes, a red nose, a black moustache, and a  
 bristly chin, asked me if I had surrendered my money.  
 "A few pence," I said. "You done wrong," he replied,  
 "you should 'a left it in the 'edge outside." The  
 official, when I stepped into the bath, stood over me  
 with a long-handled brush with bristles like stiff  
 twigs. Observing that I did not need it he demurred;  
 and, realising that I could not be a professional, he  
 gave me a few words of advice about arriving at  
 Casual Wards so late in the evening. I slept with  
 difficulty on a thin blanket laid over large unresisting  
 diamonds of wire that left red patterns on my thighs  
 and back. The morning, as I had carefully arranged,  
 was Sunday morning. No stone-breaking on Sundays:  
 I was released early, after a plate of thin porridge,  
 with a hunk of stale bread, that I ate as I walked down  
 the street. And I tramped from there to Chelsea,  
 where my best friend was to be found.

What a walk for an unaccustomed man not versed  
 in the past of all those neighbourhoods: Isleworth,



the fringe of Hounslow, Brentford, Chiswick, Hammersmith, Fulham, the King's Road! "Wens that Cobbett never knew": an unmitigated ugliness, it seemed: hideous shops, factories, gin-palaces, in endless succession, with here and there a gas-works, a railway station, or a Victorian Gothic church or chapel to relieve the misery with a change of misery; trams and buses all along the interminable miles, and the pavements crowded with shabby townees in their Sunday best. Size, squalor, lack of purpose, were the dominant impressions on one new to it all. Not one thing interested me the whole way: the dirt was too noticeable; it was all dirt.

Were I to take that journey again to-day it would all be different, though the tentacles of the Devouring Town have stretched out even farther than they had twenty years ago. Then the London suburbs were mere names to me: I knew nothing of their past nor of their relative positions; nor did I know what delights may in any of them be lurking round the next corner. All those miles, in worn boots with a greasy handkerchief still round a blistered heel, did I trudge, not for a moment even aware that the Thames was half the time within easy reach, and that the banks of the Thames were strewn with the charming relics of rural civilisation. So depressed was I with the featurelessness of the new that I never noticed the presence of the old, seeing only the great gold and black

fascias, the projected one-storey shops, the blackened front gardens, the groaning, creaking trams, the congested cross-roads, the wretched hordes of people, and saying to myself, "No wonder Gissing wrote as he did!" Yet, if I took that walk now, every quarter of a mile would show me "objects of interest," and any street-name or inn-sign might start a train of thought. The Kraken, modern London, devours and devours, yet the hard skulls and timbers of its prey remain intact within its capacious folds. An inn may even be vilely rebuilt in Brewers' Olde Englysshe or Twentieth Century Transition, but its name will remain; such a name as "The Packhorse and Talbot" in Chiswick High Road, which summons the imagination at once to a mediæval mode of transport, a mediæval sporting dog, and a mediæval hero. As I went through Brentford I might have thought of its antiquity, its two Kings, the Elizabethan playwrights who used to gather at the Pigeons, the merry jests of George Peele. Whether I knew of these things I cannot now say; but I do know that I did not then connect them with what I saw. I passed the gate of Syon House and knew nothing of it; the approach to Kew Bridge and was unaware of it, of the great domesticated landscape on the other side, the palm house, the orangery, Sir William Chambers's pagoda; Kew Gardens then were to me a name without a local habitation, and no memory

of their lilacs perfumed the neighbourhoods around them. Just behind the squalid respectabilities of Gunnersbury lay intact the riverside village street of Strand-on-the-Green, fine Augustan mansions, tumble-down cottages, ancient pubs with little balconies overlooking the brown tides of the Thames and the sleeping hulls of fishing-boats which, within living memory, had sailed from here to the Nore, past all the traffic and history of London, on their proper business. Rousseau had lived down one turning in Chiswick; down another I might have come upon the lion-guarded gate of the high-walled park where still stands the classic mansion which Burlington built and in which Fox died; and another, if I chance to see it to-day, calls me to Hogarth's house, to an inn—closed the other day by the brewers—almost as old as Agincourt, to old Chiswick Church and the graveyard where Loutherbourn lies underneath the most perfectly orotund of inscriptions, to the ferry where old wrinkled Fishlock recalled the Crimea in August 1914, to the little Mall dock where the red-sailed barges lie moored in peaceful twilights, to a great tree over the pavement, to river-gardens and a cuckoo heard in one, to a company of old houses, a row of poplars, a flour-covered bakery with a quay, an old blind lady in a trim little house, full of mahogany, china, antimacassars and carpets, children playing on bicycles, a swan sitting in the osier bed

of the Eyot, a dead friend, twelve years of my own life. The poplars one year were pollarded, and for days two crows, which had always nested in them, flew bewildered round the ghost of its crown, in search of what was gone for ever.

Of what was, and what was to be, on that drab distant Sunday, I was utterly unaware, seeing only the streets, trams and people, not knowing when I crossed the frontiers of all these indistinguishable boroughs, insensitive to the remains of the villages they had been, or any painful modern efforts to recover for them something of individuality and give them new centres and a touch of new dignity. There is a dream behind Hammersmith Town Hall, and an aspiration behind the Secondary School behind Duke's Meadows. Utterly unaware, I was plodding mechanically onward, asking always the way to King's Road, near the end of which was a shabby square I had once visited. A few days followed. We went to a meeting at which there spoke, with a fine sweeping certainty about all things, a younger Bernard Shaw with a redder beard. We sat on twopenny seats over the Serpentine while night came over and the long reflections of the lamps brightened on the water. I saw several extraordinary little men in buildings off Fleet Street who were unable to suggest to me even the smallest job at the lowest salary. I took, with an attempt at hope,

a letter of introduction to H. W. Massingham from an old friend, who had not seen him for years, but had often bicycled with him in Battersea Park in a past age, when that exercise, in that curious place, was fashionable. He asked me what I was prepared to write about. "Almost anything," I answered, "but especially poetry." His lizard's eyes blinked behind his shining glasses. "They all say that," he said. They do.

The wrinkled nutcracker smile was not unkindly, but there was no promise in it. He saw young aspirants every day, no doubt. Years later we became acquainted and he evidently did not remember me; nor did I ever tell him that for a day I had pinned my last hopes on him. He was a jaundiced politician, and had no understanding of men; but generous of soul and attractive when you were with him. I last met him by accident, one sunny morning in August 1924, on the step of the Pilgrims' Inn at Glastonbury. We talked for five minutes and went off in our respective cars: he to Cornwall, where, within a week or so, he suddenly died.

The office doors of the *Nation*, the halfpenny dailies, and *Pearson's Weekly*—where I only just missed thirty shillings a week as a judge of Limerick competitions—closed behind me. London would not even be a "stony-hearted mother" to me, and I must creep back to my province. I worked off the

spleen by walking from London, through Winchester to Salisbury, in just over forty-eight hours. Chelsea at two; Guildford—with the gas-lamps shining melancholy on laurels outside—at half-past ten. Then, by error in the dark, Godalming; then Farnham; Alton in the early morning, with a small hot brown loaf from a baker's just opened. Two nights out, sleeping rough by snatches, heaven knows where. I had never seen that road before, and now I know every turn on it. A train from Salisbury and I was back at my *point d'appui*.

It wasn't entirely solitary. There were good men on that struggling newspaper; and I had a few friends in the town, as well as others, in Cambridge, in London, and wandering with the wind, who sent me news of the progress of the Union, of international comity, of the young Crichtons of my time, of literary life in Copenhagen, hotels in Florence, missions in India, and football in Singapore. I played occasionally for scratch rugger teams, and watched a good deal of football on Saturday afternoons. I heard Madame Patti, gloriously manipulating a cracked voice, sing "Home, Sweet Home," at what may have been the last of her many farewells; admired the fiddling acrobatics of Zacharewitsch, still (I suppose) playing somewhere, probably in America; listened to Mischa Elman, then an adolescent prodigy, self-conscious and foreign, in a velvet coat, in "Air—Bach," and the Mendelssohn

Concerto, which I still love; heard for the first time Haydn's Clock Symphony, and (gallantly played by the Marines) the Jupiter Symphony; saw Leonard Boyne, plump and spruce, in *Raffles*, and I know not what other plays of the period. On Saturdays and evenings off there were communings with naval officers in bars, or meetings with the revolutionaries in Ruskin Hall or the open market-place. Once Frederick Rogers, bookbinder and book-lover, father and mother of Old Age Pensions, stayed with me and once old H. M. Hyndman, social democrat patriot, gossip, and egoist, after a great "demonstration" at which he eloquently talked of Marx, chattel slavery, wage-slavery, ballots and bullets, came back with me for the night and sat up talking of the politicians of the 'eighties and the cricketers of the 'sixties—for that frock-coated and bearded old rogue, for all his assumptions of universal importance, his casual hints as to offices that Lord Salisbury and Mr Gladstone would have given him, his glancing references to "my friend Clemenceau," and his very candid views about the movement which he himself, had been in his remote early days a Sussex County cricketer and was still annoyed that he hadn't obtained his Cambridge Blue. Sometimes there were walks in woods, on hills; sometimes there was a sail in dinghy; there was a man who loved *A Shropshire Lad* and another who knew Borrow by heart. Ye

mostly it was work, and work at night; the machines drumming behind and below; the boys coming up for the little wads of copy; the scramble soon after midnight; the respite when all had gone down and it was now for the printers to finish the job; the wait for the first damp and sticky copy with everything miraculously sobered and strengthened in type, and miraculously fitting; the supper, or very early breakfast, of cocoa and cheese, under the lamps; the fearless mice who leapt on the table and sat up nibbling the fragments of cheese. It seems in retrospect, charming and amusing; time adds a tone to our most trivial memories, as to our chairs, our cathedrals, and our very skin. Yet, it was stagnation and suspense, all this; and in London I resumed the progress of my youth.

Two years of waiting; an opportunity of sorts; and I began a real acquaintance with London. London for me, as for how many thousands of others, is a part of that most critical and crucial period of youth, the period of awakened intellect and fulfilled emotion. It was not the sprawling London of the suburbs, not London the swallower, London the builders' dormitory, the London that I had glimpsed in casual visits to a College Mission, or on "sprees" (the word has died out), watching a game in the afternoon and, in the evening, scrumming with a mob at the Empire or daringly drinking at some cosmopolitan lounge while,



at a table apart, sat the woman of Babylon, with a large plumed picture hat, her face impassive, her eyes smiling. It was not the London of the rich nor the London of the poor—though these became gradually known: it was not, in a way, London at all: it was the mythical country Bohemia, which is inland, yet has a sea-coast: Shakespeare's paradox acquired meaning after him: only thus vaguely could be presented so shifting a place, a State which is more of a state. For me, when I entered it, I lived in that shabby Chelsea square of which I spoke. My landlady was a decayed French baroness, whose husband, long ago, had been Ambassador to Mexico, perhaps (for I cannot remember) to the Mexico of Maximilian, gallant and unfortunate Hapsburg, who ended his life (where was it I saw in youth a picture, a woodcut, peaked postmen's caps and baggy trousers: in an old volume of the *Illustrated London News*?) facing a firing-squad of his own subjects and soldiers. Being French, she was an expert in omelettes; into which she always contrived to introduce fragments of cinder and enamel from the vehicle; but she gave me several admirable French books, and her old brain was as intelligent as her grey hair was disordered. Thence did I sally in the mornings to send the most recondite metropolitan views and information to hungry minds in the country—first with . . . but what does that matter? It was the evenings and the week-ends that

mattered. Contemporaries had gathered from the University; they had got in touch with other young men who in some singular way had acquired intelligence, knowledge, and even wit, without ever going to the University; and in all the circles of ardour and enlightenment there were as many women as men. They were not bobbed or shingled, but they seemed so. London in those days, and at that stage of one's life, was liberation. It was possible to talk to young women, who knew all about music and economics, on even the most alarming subjects, without feeling, or at any rate betraying, the slightest embarrassment. We went in throngs to the gallery at Covent Garden, where the knees of the row behind stuck into our backs; to the arena at Queen's Hall (smoking permitted), where Sir Henry Wood perspiringly whacked out "1812" and "Finlandia"; to meetings where Chestertons and Bellocs obstinately and too convincingly countered the Bee-hive Utopias to which we had too readily surrendered. We chattered seriously about oracles who were swindlers and fools and who are not now even remembered as that much. We sat about on the cushioned floors of studios and the bravely brown-papered walls of unfurnished lodgings (the lodgers often very poor), exchanging mature and crystallised views about Shaw and the Webbs, Debussy, Tolstoy, Maeterlinck, Charles Booth, Trusts, Combines, Cartels, the Stage Censorship, and

the Czardom. Hardy, Bridges, and Housman were there in the background waiting for us, but we never talked of them. We argued, instead, that the Poor Law must be reformed, that Campbell-Bannerman and Asquith should force through Home Rule, that Women's Suffrage should be granted—lest worse befall. We were, obviously, sometimes right; equally obviously, we were often wrong. But we had an eagerness, a directness, a capacity for enterprise and the selection of essentials, peculiar to our age, and generally lacking in old men, who wait for death and merely wish, pending their demise, to keep the old pot boiling in the old way.

Now we are ageing, those of us who are left. We have learnt much—for the old easy solutions of the garlicky cafés in Soho and the meetings of the converted were grotesque. But we have lost something. Energy and faith are as essential as knowledge: we acquire that, we generally lose the others. Looking back on those years in which I learnt my physical London, and acquired, unforgettably, my spiritual London, I see pictures of dreaming youth preparing for action. I see Frederic Keeling (for some forgotten reason "Ben") making statistics exciting in his rooms in the Walworth Road and his later rooms of Chancery Lane: bearded, flabby-lipped, wild, brown-eyed, much eyelashed, tumble-haired, a man gone wrong but chivalrously wrong, voluble on blue-books,

fierce about sex, Germanophile, destined to be shot (as C.S.M.) by the Germans, talking, the last time he came on leave to see me, about his privates betting on louse-races—for, until he entered the Army, he had never really (for all his slumming) got in touch with the ordinary Englishman. I see again Charles Lister, in a Strand café, and in the vast bleak Gatti's in Villiers Street, sitting amid a crowd of youth of both sexes after some lecture: self-possessed, slow-eyed, wavy-haired, with the equine beauty of his father; restlessly toying with a teaspoon, shocking his bourgeois associates as much by his aristocratic calm as by his revolutionary sentiments. And I see Rupert Brooke, who had come up to Cambridge the term after I went down, and whom I had first met on a fleeting visit in 1907 to the place. He sits in a window-seat above a crowd of gabbling people, who smoke and drink beer and coffee, and talk about Keir Hardie, the Dolomites, and Strauss. He enters a crowded room in Lincoln's Inn, fair-haired, sunburnt, serene, straight-eyed: his collar is soft-blue, his suit fits loosely but perfectly: everybody is hushed by his appearance. I drink with him in a window of the National Liberal Club, and he comments on the infant sky-sign of an enterprising tobacconist next the Playhouse: "It runs round like mice," he says. Then, later, when first youth had gone, he came to say good-bye; sorry for the death of Flecker, not thinking of his

own death, his fame, and his legend. In his brief life he travelled much: he always returned to London; he had many lives elsewhere, but in London some of us can best recover him. He died, and his death was the signal of the death of something in all his contemporaries. There were tea-shops; and luncheons by the Embankment Wall, with the familiar gulls taking the leavings. There were walks to Limehouse and the Blackwall Tunnel; there was a gradual knowledge of the Museum, the National Gallery, the Soane, Dulwich, Hampstead, Toynbee Hall: a mastery, ultimately, of the middle and operative part of London, and some clue to the suburbs. The War came: obliteration, a gulf, age.

That same London still exists, a little changed, but the same. It exists for others, not for us. We have lost our illusions, and arrived, as we think, at a sounder faith, or, the more unfortunate of us, at a deeper and more genuine cynicism. But, though they may assume other forms, our illusions and delusions persist around us, among us, in our sons, our nephews. The sons and nephews of our friends are still inhabiting a London that is new and enchanting to them, a London of hope and discovery, and eager youthful theory and experiment. We, of my generation and those generations senior to me, meet these young. We seem to establish contact with them; but they are foreigners to us and we to them.

They are our own lost selves in a changed environment—an environment so imperceptibly changed that they cannot recognise us nor we them, though we may greet each other sympathetically across the abyss. What, in the intimacy of their midnight conversations, do they really think about us and the provisional beliefs at which we have arrived? What are their opinions about foreign politics or home politics? What pull does religion exercise upon them? By what moral criteria do they judge their own and each other's actions? In which direction do they intend (and what they intend will be made fact) that artistic development shall proceed? How far, when we are with them, do they exercise the control that we exercised and conceal thoughts such as we concealed: writing him down a fool whom we affected, in his presence, to admire, and worshipping, as a prophet, him with whom we never were brought into contact?

We cannot know. It is possible to imagine conversations, utterly honest, with boys twenty years junior to oneself. Some, obviously, are pessimistic, some unduly and impracticably idealistic. With either, the impulse of the elder is always to say, "When I was your age"; to substitute the truths of experience for the premature assumptions of youth, thereby helping the young to stand on the shoulders of their fathers, skipping unnecessary stages in their

development. Vain hope! As well urge the prospective butterfly to omit the chrysalis stage! *Si jeunesse savait!* Were it possible for youth "to know," the proverb would never have existed. We think we remember the whole attitude of our youth; but the one thing we forget, and forget that we forget, is that we ourselves, before we passed out of that golden state, were subject to the desperate advice of our seniors, and were simply unable to grasp that these men had been young in their time and still preserved the integrity of their hearts and minds. They had (we supposed) been born elderly; or the years had made them cynical and fat; they had lost the capacity for the faith that could so easily make such great changes, or the sensitiveness which could respond to the intolerable sufferings of mankind. How could there be contact between such as they and such as we? We were another race, another people, our eyes and wills set upon something that these could never see. The young are a secret society, and the old cannot remember that they once belonged to it.

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## DUTY

THEY had told him that he must not go into the coal-cellar; for when he had been there he had made himself very filthy. Being a little boy with a considerable sense of duty, and a dislike of breaking his pledged word, he did try his best to keep away from it. But that grimy door at the end of the kitchen passage had a strong fascination; and at last, after an irksome smoky fog had kept him indoors for two days, he was so bored with everything that he crept down the stairs, hesitated, glanced around, went on again, and finally, his heart thudding because of his sin, opened the cellar door and went into the gloom.

Just inside the door the faint rays of gaslight from the misty passage gleamed on ridges of smooth coal; but round to the right the darkness was intense, a soft hollow darkness that revealed no farther wall, and was filled with a sea of silence.

He felt along the uneven wall, deliberately turning his back on the door in order that he might not see the least echo of light; then, inhaling languorously the opiate scent of the coal, he stared into the darkness and noiselessly swept his left hand to and fro with his fingers grasping at the impalpable. The hushed



companionable spaces of the darkness lulled and rocked him, so that he felt no desire to move; forgetful of everything he gazed and gazed, breathing deeply, until pinkish stars and waves swam over his vision, and he felt faint.

With a kind of silent shock his sight cleared again. Opposite him in the black wall there was a sharp vertical line of bright yellow light. It broadened a little and smeared the coal at his feet with gold; it opened still wider and he saw, on a level as it seemed with his head, the bright green head of a tree, still in the sunlight. "Oh," he sighed excitedly, and stepped forward, his hands groping before him. Two stumbles, and he was at the strange door; his hand flung it back and he crossed the threshold to a pavement which slept white under the throbbing hot glory of a wonderful summer sky.

He was on the terrace, smoothly-flagged, of a long and placid stone house. There was no door behind him, only a high leaded oriel window with mouldering stone lace-work, the first of a line that stood along the converging avenue of the terrace. Looking through the panes he saw a long spacious hall to which all the windows belonged, and on the glassy floor of the room each window flung a broad stream of sunlight, slightly stained here and there with red or blue colour.

But though the house was old and beautiful it was

not so beautiful as the landscape that spread beyond the low stone balustrade of the terrace. From the fishpond at the parapet's foot fell away the gardens of the house, first a series of sweeping lawns, then tangled borders of flowers, then, still sloping downwards towards an encircling valley in the middle distance, tall trees, and trees behind them, and gentle multitudes of tree-tops. The land fell; and then in a long gentle slope it rose again; there came ridge after ridge, softly green, meadows and clumps of trees and lonely poplars, remote, remote, until the most shadowy pencillings of land ended in a blue haze on the verge of sight.

Shading his eyes, for a time he stared out over the rolling territory, watching contentedly the mild shapes of the woods near him, or screwing his eyes up in a strained endeavour to see more clearly some uncertain object far away. The sun shone warm on his cheek, and his hand was warm on the balustrade; contemplation of this equable scene lulled him in complete ease and satisfaction. Being no artist and not very capable of naming things external or internal, he felt a reposeful elation without knowing or even asking why; and it was natural to him not to search for the date of the house or speculate as to the titles of the curious and superb blooms that crowded the flower-beds below. And so fine was the day, so exhilarating the air, that, although he was normally

possessed of a great craving to explore empty and unknown rooms, he felt no impulse to look for an entrance into the house.

At the far end of the terrace there was a shrill cry and a flap of wings. A moulting peacock, one or two long feathers protruding from the dun shrubbery of his truncated tail, strutted down the balustrade, jerking his shiny blue neck and nodding his thinned crest. The boy, hands in pockets, nonchalantly walked down to meet him; but he was shy of approaches and flew up into a tree with dark green leaves which overhung the corner of the house. "Oh, you needn't if you don't want to," said he, and he turned down the broad reach of steps that led to the first lawn.

It was very pleasant to have no one near; to be master of one's surroundings and to walk where one liked; to jump or lie down; to handle anything one liked: but it was sufficient to feel that regal loneliness, and he made no attempt to exercise its privileges to any great extent. At the bottom of the steps he peered for a time into the filmy green depths of the pond where glided the huge shapes of ancestral carp, grey before he was born. He sat on the rim, cooled his hands in the water, and picked at the lichens on the brickwork. Then he sauntered over the fresh sunlit grass down between throngs of flowers into the margin of the wood. A few birds

combated their summer drowsiness with unfrequent notes. He looked up for them and could not find them; but through the branches the quivering blue sky was all burning with the sun. He turned and looked up at the long stone house. There it sat, firm on its stone bastion: its high tranquil windows reflecting the sun; its even battlements clearly cut against the blue behind them; its flanks guarded by tall seneschals of trees. It seemed as though this place of all places must be the true centre of the world; so serenely from its height did it look out over the world and silently command it.

Peace, though he scarcely knew the word, entered the boy's heart. A red admiral fluttered into the wood's edge and settled near him on a fretted spray of briar. He watched it thoughtfully as it opened its gorgeous dark wings with their bright red bars or closed them into a single rich upright leaf. It flew away, upward through the branches towards the sky. Quietly he followed its flight; quietly he turned away; slowly he walked up the slope, concerned for nothing but to breathe the soft air and unhurriedly gaze at the scene around him. He looked again at the profusion of cups and stars and bells in the flower-beds, and the even verdure of the lawns; he watched for a while the slow motion of the great fishes in the pond, and then again he climbed to the sweet and stately dignity of the terrace windows,

and surveyed the wide magnificence of the country that rolled away with its wooded ridges to the very verge of sight. As he stood there behind the balustrade drinking with childish eyes the enchanted expanse of earth, there flooded in upon him, though he knew not its name, one great luxurious rhythm that lifted him away with massive and resistless swell. His head grew dizzy; pinkish waves and stars swam before his eyes; and out of darkness he awoke in a dismal coal-cellar, very damp, aching in all his limbs, and afraid of what would happen to him.

Such are the pleasures, and such, unhappily, the rewards of sensual delights and the obliviousness of duty.

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## A GOOD LITTLE BOY

IN adolescence and early maturity a man usually allows his boyhood to pass out of remembrance. His mental operations are extensive and thrusting; he is obsessed by his own intellectual development; he seldom glances backward; he regards the child of the past as the mere larva which has evolved into a higher and more brilliant creature, a being with unequalled powers and superb sensibilities; a prince of created things. He can and may recall some of the child's habits and journeys, some of its grievances and deceptions, jealousies, ambitions and prides. These by an effort of memory he is able to recover, though they are mostly dead to him, like the occasions, the chance concatenations of unimportant events that caused them. But he does not trouble to remember the child's most intense and intimate experiences, the adventures not directly related with other persons, the joys that arose from fresh and unhabituated contact with nature. There comes a time when things change. After a man has outgrown his first enthusiasms and illusions he learns to reverence his own childhood. It is invested with a new and almost sacred interest for him.

On the long line of solitary meditation or in the drag-net of miscellaneous conversation some stray reminiscence from early years is brought shining to the surface; and it is not again thrown away. By degrees such memories accumulate until there is a coherent fabric of them, recollections of impressions long since received by a being who formulated nothing and deliberately recorded nothing. A man exhausts culture; he discovers that Art is but a makeshift by which the sophisticated painfully struggle to recreate sensations that well spontaneous in the souls of the young. He comes to realise that the best and truest æsthete is the child. Memory teaches that the natural child, ignorant of culture which is born of comparison, analysis, and classification, breathes in beauty as the plant its proper air; sound and colour and form and the play of light fill him with wonder and joy, and he does not attempt or dream of definition or explanation.

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The child, very young, was given balls and skeins of coloured wools with which it was intended he should make reins for human horses. He was indifferent and clumsy about the manufacture, which was conducted by means of pins stuck into large corks with holes in them; but of the colours he never tired. They were bright and varied. Vermilion

on a skein would merge into splendid orange and that into a pure yellow and that into green; or a pale celestial blue would pass into a blue more gorgeous, and that into purple, which would grade—and the marvellous surprise of the changes never palled—into a scale of glorious browns. Here shape had nothing to do with his pleasure; in those simple ropes of wool the dazzlingly vivid colours were almost disembodied, like the hues of a luminous cloudless sunset. The child did not know what he was doing; but he would hold the skeins in his hands, his eyes very still, sighing from excess of delight. Colour was his divinity, which took him out of himself; contemplation of it consumed him; unconsciously he strove to plunge into the heart of the colour as the religious mystic into the bosom of God. Even then he knew, though he did not put his feelings into words, something of the grief of unattainment; for, with all his straining of heart and eyes, he could never reach the inmost core of those heaving waves of splendour. His elders would remark: "Isn't he a good little boy; he amuses himself so nicely."

Sometimes he was very happy by the sea. He loved the rock-pools with their red and green anemones, and the stones in the shingle, all of which were beautiful and never two alike. Especially he loved those calm days when one can look along a level glittering sea and the sails on the horizon



are like little clouds. But in the country he was always happy; he would steep himself in the scent and the warm shadows of barns; great rugged tree-trunks and smooth lawns were never lacking, and there were always delightful particular places where he could go by himself. .

In one place a little path took him out of sight of the low house to a piece of waste land covered with ragged clumps of bramble and thorn. On the farther side was a swamp. Out of the water, where ridged newts swam, sprang green sword-like reeds and mottled yellow irises, strong flowers, sublimely fashioned, which seemed to return his gaze. On the moist hummocks of the bank grew a multitude of rushes, narrow javelins each tufted with a brown tuft at the side. He would pluck one and strip off its green skin, drawing out a long soft kernel almost weightless and as white as whitest snow. This he would lay across his hand and admire; or draw it over his cheek and lip for the exquisite softness of it; and then he would break it. There was something that moved him profoundly when at the smallest tension it almost melted into fragments. He was experiencing the poignancy and loveliness that cling to all that floats and to everything that is evanescent.

In another place, where he spent a long summer, there was an orchard of old mossy trees, sunny and undisturbed, with long green grass underfoot. The

orchard made a gentle valley for a little brook which curved peacefully through its entire length, here so narrow that one could step across it, and here broadening out into a bright shallow pool reflecting the clouds and the sky. Hither he would come day after day, no one knowing where he was, and lie all the afternoon, face downwards on the bank, his hands supporting his chin, in some spot where the sun fell through overhanging leaves to the cool flowing water. He would observe very intently the flies delicately wafting over the surface, and the small fish, with heads pointing up-stream, waving gently in the current. More often, for from this he derived most pleasure, he watched the rivulet's bed of light brown sand. Shadows would fleet across it as the clouds went overhead, and now and then, most perfect delight of all, a tiny ring of light, like a hollow star. It never occurred to him that this was the reflection of a bubble surviving from an elfin waterfall farther up; it was a beautiful mystery as it sailed slowly over the peaceful sand under the clear water. In the evening he went to bed with his skin slightly burning and his eyes tired; and he slept dreamless.

The grown man can seldom lose himself. He criticises; he examines; he enjoys briefly. Beauty can pierce him suddenly; it cannot often envelop him from dawn to twilight. Surrender to beauty must be involuntary to be complete; purpose and self-

consciousness break the bond and the enchantment. We, with our intellect, must needs separate ourselves from things; we know ourselves standing outside them and the separation engenders chillness. The child alone, wise in his oblivion to facts and theories, can reach a calm and abiding unity with the hidden world of which the visible is the cloak. He walks with beauty daily and has no necessity for a creed.

## THE GOLD TREE

ALL the years I was at Cambridge I had a room with Gothic windows, very high in the great mock-Gothic building. When the leaves were out there were no roofs or walls within sight, and the room was so high that, seated at my window, I was almost on a level with the uppermost large branches of a vast spreading elm, which stood over against me and dominated all the other trees in the thickly wooded gardens. When one was by the farther wall of the room the moving green caves and promontories of the great tree filled the whole space of the window; but leaning on the sill one saw it framed in sky with copses and walks stretching away behind it.

I spent many hours watching that tree when, as often happened, I was feeling too indolent for other occupations. In bleak winter twilights, when its extended branches rose in dark austerity amid the cold and wet, or toughly struggled with a fierce wind, I saw it a self-reliant Titan, a vegetable Prometheus, a dumb and vigilant spirit without hope and without fear as the tempests swelled and the menacing darkness came round. When spring thrust away winter, and the clustered crocuses, yellow,

purple and mauve, shone in the grass about its foot, faint delicate veils spread over its branches, veils of buds which presently broke forth into leaves. In summer it was a great palace for birds. The rooks tumbled about its pinnacles at earliest dawn, and then it became alive with the chatter of little birds, which made its bushy wall sway and bulge and break as they swarmed in and out. Usually when the edges of the western leaves shone with sunset red, a companionless thrush sang there fitfully and poignantly; I would listen, wide-eyed and quiet, forgetting time. Most of all, the great elm was beautiful in the autumn, when it was clad in a glory of rich colour, the magnificence of the fulfilment which precedes death. But in all the autumns save the first I took little pleasure in it, and could not look at it without a vague aching at the heart.

Nature, that first autumn, must have struck some happy and subtle equilibrium of sun and wind and rain. Perhaps never since that great tree's third progenitor was a sapling and the mortar was fresh on the oldest college walls, had just that unheralded miracle been achieved by just that impalpable balance of heat and atmospheric pressure, of moisture and light. I did not speculate about this; I had no inclination to dissect the beautiful thing I saw. But every morning I woke with the marvel gently waving before my eyes, a tree of pure and stainless gold; and

every afternoon, when all around the walks and lawns were tranced in lucid stillness, I sat on my sill and gazed at the transfigured multitude of leaves.

At first the tree's garment was thick and profuse. It lay, one would say, in mounded waves and beaches, still slightly stained with remembrance of the late summer, the dry dark greens and soiled dusty browns. Now and then leaves fell. Each day there were more of them scattered on the level grass around the roots; but for two or three weeks the dense masses of foliage on the branches appeared undiminished and unthinned. Then, with swift though imperceptible gradation, as October wore on, the change came.

One afternoon I saw with a sudden joyous pang that the tree had changed into something more beautiful than anything I had ever seen in my life. Chinks of sky were everywhere visible between the twigs, and the leaves had all gone a uniform gold. It was not the heavy gold of opulent stuffs from Italian looms; it had no tinge of brown or crimson. It was splendid; but the splendour was pale and pure and spiritual. Here, in an immense complex pattern, were thousands of leaves of ethereal gold. They were all thin and smooth and perfectly shaped. They were all distinct; yet they seemed, though so clear and finely edged, weightless and unsubstantial. The tree was a vision of that perfection that dwells always as a longing in some recess of the soul, and

that is scarcely ever realised in any material embodiment. So for seven days it remained.

Nothing marred it. Every day was mild, radiant, exquisitely peaceful; the sky was of that clear autumnal blue which has something of the quality of silver, the shining blue that in the fall of the year broods maternally over all tranquil places, the remote yet consoling blue that is closest to the spirit of old gardens and moss-grown statues and fountains forgotten by man. Hour by hour I sat staring at the gold against the far azure; and the only motion visible was the gentle motion of the leaves that fell like great gold petals. They seemed to fall quite evenly and rhythmically; one by one, without hurry, they floated gently down through the windless air with a slow continuous magic that made an almost intolerably wonderful harmony with that other magic of the motionless lovely colour. Twilight came over, and dimly I could see them falling still; and when night closed in and the tree was a confused web against the starry spaces I knew that they still fell, evenly and rhythmically, like gold petals floating down to death.

The gold leaves became sparser. The spaces of sky became wider. Each leaf was outlined yet more clearly and definitely against the silvery blue. Perfection was perhaps most perfect when the leaves on the ground far below lay in such heaps that those on

the boughs stood out each a single paten of gold with a frame of blue between it and the next, but still a host in number. Their fragile and ravishing beauty breathed such tenderness that involuntary tears came to my eyes and my lips trembled. For this was the most beautiful thing in the world, and as I gazed it was passing away.

A night came when the wind rose and the leaves with no resistance were swept down in flying companies. Next day a few golden stragglers alone clung to the bare boughs, the dishevelled remnants of a great army that had gone along its road. The tree of spiritual gold was no more; there remained a hard great tree strong to battle with the iron winds of winter. Beauty, supreme beauty, had died; and why had the heart survived it? There was a vague aching in my breast as with fixed and filmy eyes I gazed unseeing out of the window, over the forgetful paths and lawns, to a world man never sees, but the nature of which he sometimes obscurely apprehends through fragmentary symbols.

In none of the other autumns was the tree of gold to be seen. The hues of the great elm's vesture were year by year luxuriant and gorgeous, but the pale and even and stainless gold did not come again. The excitement of expectancy was always followed by the depression of disappointment; I grew to feel that what I had seen once I should not see again.



But, perhaps, that when I am an old man, near my grave, I shall some day wander into the gardens below my old window, and find a second time the tree of gold, still and perfect, under a consoling autumn sky.

# ENGLISH BIRDS

## BIRDS IN POETRY

**I**N England the birds are all around us. As I write I am in a room in Outer London, with miles of suburbs still between me and the open country. I have just stood, first at the back window, over the small garden with its acacia, its two pear-trees, its little grove of lilacs and flowering currants, and then at the window in front which overlooks a road, a waterside garden, and the osiers of Chiswick Eyot and the Thames, with the houses of Barnes beyond. Everywhere there are birds, perched and flying: starlings crossing the upper air, sparrows troubling the holly, a thrush intermittently singing behind the upper veils of the ash-tree, chaffinches tinkling somewhere unseen. So it is all the year. In mere point of frequency the birds are far more commonly seen here than anything else in animate nature, excepting man: for us they are, to all intents and purposes, animate nature. There are insects, many if one looks for them, few if one does not: a pair of chasing white butterflies, a ladybird on a rose-leaf, a little bronzed beetle now and then, and in their season caterpillars of the currant and vapourer moths. Animals, beyond the domestic, are not here at all.

Twice a year, perhaps, I may hear a plop in the water and catch sight of a ripple and the head of a water-rat hurrying to the overhung bank of the island. But the birds are always present, numerous and various, even here. The twittering of the small birds is perpetual; every morning's dew is printed with the claws of blackbirds and thrushes, a robin nested this year behind the thick streamers of the virginia creeper on the back wall, tits ceaselessly hop about on the high twigs of the fruit-trees. Year by year a pair of crows have built in a tall poplar by the river. They came back this year to find it pollarded, circled in bewilderment for a morning round the space where the vanished tree-top had been, and then resigned themselves to a new home. Wild ducks swim on the smooth water, gulls on the stormy. There are swans which sail proudly as Spenser's. Every year a pair tries to raise a family on the Eyot. The eggs are usually addled by a spring tide. This year a benevolent and bold neighbour moved their nest a foot higher when they were off it; and now there is a family of cygnets, learning to swim, struggling against the tide and climbing between their mother's wings when they are exhausted, she moving steadily on, a solicitous but a severe parent. On summer evenings, as we pass the Eyot in a boat, a heron often will rise out of the reeds, looking, if it is getting dark, like a tattered black flag, and will flap away up-river, disappearing in

the twilight. Then, as the year wears on, the migrants rest on the osiers in thousands, and especially armies of swallows. They will fly about the sky, very high up, like an immense swarm of gnats, and then, in long streamers, all drop suddenly down. There they perch, not one visible, but the whole reed-bed alive with them; a small stone thrown in the midst will send a great cloud of them fluttering and chirping up into the dim air.

So it is all over England. There are countries where most of the birds migrate, and a winter's day may pass without a bird being seen. There are countries where small birds are few, because they are no sooner seen than they are shot for food. There are others rich in gorgeous screeching birds, but poor in the homelier singers. In England the birds and their music are everywhere. It is natural therefore that our literature should be full of them, and especially our poetry. The commonest objects must be, to use for the moment no stronger word, "mentioned" more often than the others. They are a noticeable part of almost every natural background; whatever mood or action we may be experiencing, if it be "set" out of doors, birds will be present, birds will probably be singing, and they will consequently be associated with our theme, as the other common elements of nature will be, sun and clouds, trees and grasses. By the same token, the commonest birds, the thrushes and black-

birds, rooks, peewits, robins, and sparrows, will "occur" in literature more frequently than rails or hoopoes. Unless a man deliberately go in search of these last he will seldom if ever see them; the others are daily, as it were, thrust upon us, and no desire for a change of imagery will alter the fact.

It will be found that the poets represented in Mr. H. J. Massingham's delightful and representative anthology\* have seen their birds in various aspects and written of them in manners of an analogous variety. There are those who, describing nature with a calm and comprehensive affection, have noted the characters and habits of birds as they have noted those of beasts, the transformations of the weather, and the passing of the seasons. Chaucer and Clare, Thompson and Cowper and Crabbe had an eye for their individualities and knew their way of life. Yet mere existence in nature, the mere being of a bird, would not in itself have led to the large literature which has been written about birds. Were there no other birds than the vulture and the kite, though these might have sat on every roof, bird-literature would not have been what it is, though vultures and kites would necessarily be frequently spoken of. We find in most of the tribe of birds—and the philosophers may discuss why—beauties which appeal to our æsthetic sense. These beauties they share with other

\**Poems about Birds*, by H. J. Massingham.

living things. The appealing softness and daintiness which Burns found in the linnet are precisely what he found in the field-mouse: his poems to the two are twins. The gorgeous colours of Pope's pheasant and Milton's peacock are also worn by certain snakes and baboons; the gazelle is gentle and shy, the lion majestic, the greyhound and the dragon-fly are swift. The physical beauties of the birds and the lovely qualities of their movements are not peculiar to them; but they are all around us and they possess them, and particularly an appearance of softness and grace, more plentifully than any other creatures. All poets must write of the birds who write of "Nature," and all must be moved by the beauty of many of them, their colours, their easy flight, their lightness and softness, the grace and whimsicality of their ways. Yet more than that is found in them. Above most living things man has found them, in certain regards, emblematic of his own state. In the first of all our bird-poems that moving anecdote of the Northumbrian court which, in prose, has been the first literature to move the hearts of many children in the way that poetry moves hearts, the passage of a sparrow is seen to symbolise man's transience, his journey from unknown to unknown. To watch birds passing, and especially a solitary bird, is to feel a vague emotion springing from a likeness to something in our own lives, and the words that result will depend upon the

philosophy, permanent or not, of the man who utters them. From Sydney Dobell, watching the swallow flying overseas, came the cry, "Swallow, I also seek and do not find"; in Bryant, with a firmer faith, a similar sight led to the reflection:

There is a Power whose care  
Teaches thy way along that pathless coast.

Man finds in the flight of a wild bird an emblem of his mortality; and in the caged bird he has most often found an emblem of his imprisonment by evil circumstance, the vanity of beating the bars, the sad alternative of a living death, the other sad alternative of a dull resignation, the rare resort of a brave and joyous triumph over captivity. Their lives, their wings, their familiar experience, under our eyes, of our own joys and adversities, winter and summer, plenty and penury, sun and rain, mating, parenthood and death, give them an intimate relation with us. To Blake they seemed almost a more innocent kind of human spirits, by virtue of the image of the domestic and thankful lives they lead, the swiftness and vivacity of their joys. But to most poets and mankind at large they are chiefly and most often brought near to ourselves not by their physical loveliness, their breasts and wings, nor by their social existence, but by a faculty and a love which they share with us alone.



The most intimate link between birds and poets, between birds and men, the chief cause of the voluminousness of a bird and poetry anthology, is to be found in the second of the quotations with which Massingham graces his flyleaf: "Music . . . an art common to men and birds." Nature is full of voices: but whatever predilection the modernist musician may have in favour of the nocturnal cat, it will scarcely be disputed by anyone that the birds as musicians are in a class apart, for number, ubiquity, sweetness and range. With every dawn "the innumerable choir of day" breaks into song. We, in England, are so accustomed to the birds that it is by their absence that we are best able to define a profound silence.

The sedge is withered by the lake,  
And no birds sing:

the phrase of itself produces an atmosphere to us strange and abnormal, and in one form or another it has been used a thousand times. Everywhere, at all seasons, they are around us; the down is very lonely and the marsh very desolate which harbours no bird that sings, and in our habitual fields and lanes and gardens the twittering is so continuous that we notice it most when it stops, when a hush falls with excessive heat or the approach of thunder. They are always ready for us, whatever our mood; and whatever our

mood it is not unnatural that we should link it to their music, finding it either a vicarious song expressing our mood, or, more bitterly, an alien rejoicing indifferent to it. The latter experience is much the rarer; where the music of the birds is referred to in the present collection there is seldom the note of "How can you sing, you bonny bird?" The birds are sympathetic; if they carry messages their messages are like that of Milton's nightingale, "Thou with fresh hope the lover's heart dost fill"; they are a choir in the cathedral of heaven expressing their joys and (as man cannot but feel) gratitude on his behalf as well as their own, for the perennial blessings of life, for mere living itself, for love, for spring and the end of winter, for morning and the retreat of night. The mystic in exaltation will at times hear the song of worship from all animate and all inanimate nature. The Psalmist knew that truth; it is magnificently recorded in the *Song to David* and Mr. Hodgson's *Song of Honour*; it is characteristically phrased in Vaughan's "Yet stones are deep in admiration," and "hills and valleys into singing break"; it is stated with charming simplicity in the seventeenth-century Hymn of John Hall:

Yet do the lazy snails no less  
 The greatness of our Lord confess.  
 Their ruder voices do as well,  
 Yes, and the speechless fishes tell.

Yet Hall has to remind himself of this truth. He is rationalizing from the memory of a rare experience, and it is from the obvious, the undeniable, the everyday "happy chorister of air" that he has to start; those whose song the physical ear never allows us to forget. It is in David ap Gwlym's beautiful poem that their song is compared to a Mass; and the thought recurs through all our poetry. In the far trills of the lark in the throbbing of the thrush's throat, we see a spring of joy and gratitude the more pure, more certain and spontaneous and courageous, than anything that comes, except at rare moments, from a race looking before and after, and consciously "clutching the inviolable shade." The moments would be rarer still were the birds not there for companionship and example; many of our most joyous bursts of song have been directly inspired by them.

# BIRD-WATCHING

## I

THERE are in our present English Civilization, tendencies that one must deplore. There are also tendencies which are elating. It has often been observed (foreign visitors remarked it even in the Middle Ages) that the English are fond of the country and like living in it; the discovery, and early exploitation, of coal and iron was not their fault. The Industrial Revolution came suddenly and could not at once be coped with; but its late consequences are now being fought. The slums are being countered with Garden Cities and County Council flats; no sooner do the garish petrol-stations invade the villages than a vigorous agitation against them begins; the plague of rural advertisements is in process of mitigation; the possessions of the National Trust greatly increase annually, owing to the widespread desire for the preservation of solitudes; the C.P.R.E. has come into existence and saved the upper reaches of the Thames just when the fate of the lower reaches threatened to overtake them; the massacre of trees has produced a general interest in afforestation; and

there has been a change in the national attitude towards our "Wild Life" just as the richness and variety of our "Wild Life" were being threatened. The bittern and the bustard we have lost; the fens were drained and the bustard was too large and accessible. The bittern, at least, has come back now that there are bird-sanctuaries in East Anglia, and we shall not, it appears, lose many more. Even with regard to the common birds there is a perceptible change in the public attitude. Village children may still "pug" nests and stone or torture nestlings. But wanton slaughter is diminishing; the young egg-collector is gradually being trained to take one egg rather than the whole clutch; birds are protected by law which used to be slaughtered as vermin. A growing respect for bird-life is perceptible, parallel with that feeling for our botanical heritage which leads the B.B.C. to put forward reiterated pleas for a discreeter plucking of wild flowers. Simultaneously, ornithologists have been changing character.

My own bible about birds is Morris's book—six volumes about the birds and three about their nests. The records of rare birds in this admirable work make deplorable reading. This—not an actual, but a typical, entry—may serve as a specimen:

The Lesser Broad-Billed Chuck may perhaps be classified amongst our British Birds, as three specimens have been recorded in various parts of

the country. In 1839 the Rev. R. Jones shot one at Skipton-under-the-Water, Yorks; in 1840 a second specimen (a female in fine plumage) was shot by the Rev. W. Smith at Liskeard, in Cornwall; and last year a male fell to the gun of my friend Archdeacon Robinson in an oak-wood at Bedstead, Surrey.

Records, in those early days, were almost all records of killing. To-day there are a host of observers who watch birds with enthusiastic affection, never kill a bird, and would never dream of killing a rare bird. The modern man who kills a rare bird is not regarded as the hero of an exploit, but as the perpetrator of an unpunishable crime. The collectors, the hoarders of eggs, the stuffers of skins are now a furtive race. The bird-lover now is not a man who shoots a golden oriole, but a man who saves a kestrel as Mr. Hendy\* saved one, or one who lies in sedges for hours to photograph shy wild things feeding their gaping young, or one (like Professor Garstang, whose whistling and chattering have recently delighted "listeners-in") who finds his pleasure in listening to the various strains in the multitudinous chorus of the birds and attempting to register them in some sort of musical and linguistic notation.

\**The Lure of Bird Watching*, by E. W. Hendy.

The distribution of birds is a very fascinating and mysterious subject. Hasty observers, because of a decline in some species in their own neighbourhood, will often announce that the species is becoming rare; in another district, meanwhile, the same birds have been multiplying. The Dartford Warbler is undoubtedly a rare bird; some observers regard it as a very rare bird; yet I know a parish not above forty miles from London where it nests in considerable numbers every spring. When I was a boy in Devonshire I regarded the yellow-hammer as a bird almost as common as the sparrow; its eggs, covered with Arabic inscriptions, were the small change of small boys. So it was until a few years ago in this same parish; yet now it is less common here than the black-cap; in fact, it is hardly ever seen; the reason conjectured by the local bird-authority being the decline in the output of horse-manure. Who can tell what fluctuations have occurred in the raven population of these islands? For myself I have only seen ravens wild on the cliffs of Cornwall; great black things squawking out through the weaving swarms of crying gulls, high above the beaches and the serrated foam-edged rocks on which the shags, black and brownish-grey, stand immobile. Tame ones I have known in

Western gardens, as sly as the Jackdaw of Rheims; and a raven has severely bitten me at the Tower of London—the bird it was that died. So striking a bird is the raven that it is very prominent in literature; early-nineteenth-century romantic literature is thick with ravens. But we cannot be sure that a great many authors have not written about ravens who never saw a raven; one suspects that these birds were always few and far between. Not all birds, moreover, are observed. We know that many hoopoes are noted and written about every decade; we cannot be certain as to how many have flown here, bred here, and gone away without ever being seen by anyone who would know a hoopoe from a shrike. Bird-watching is not a universal pastime; and, with the best of glasses and the extreme of patience, it is never an easy one.

## 3

The loveliest pictures of birds that I know are in Hudson's *Far Away and Long Ago*. There is one of a group of flamingoes and other invaders in a still water; and one of a flock of little yellow parakeets settling in a blossom-laden tree. Those scenes were witnessed in the Argentine seventy years ago; there are an infinity of pictures to be drawn even under our more temperate sky. There was once a kingfisher,



with a goldfish in his mouth, perched on a leaden Cupid who sprayed water into an ornamental pond . . . but that is hardly typical. Flamingoes and kingfishers are well enough. But there is one glory of the sun and another of the moon. A flock of goldfinches; a pair of nuthatches; a chequered wagtail running and pausing on a lawn; a blue-tit clambering over a coconut; a male chaffinch in full panoply; turtle doves flapping away from a hedge; a crested plover on a stone; a magpie; a jay: these may be seen any morning in any English county, and we need no cockatoos or humming-birds. The colour of birds' eggs and the structure of birds' nests (most wonderful of all the chaffinch's) are not only to be enjoyed by these who rob the birds. The chemical manufacturers of the world have been labouring for years to produce a colour like that of the thrush's egg: it can be enjoyed, any spring, at the expense of a brief search in any hedge. Many of the commonest eggs—thrush's, sparrow's, starling's, hedge-sparrow's, robin's—are amongst the most beautifully coloured: and what miracles of delicacy, putting the finest porcelains to shame, are to be found amongst the smaller eggs!

birds were stored up in early youth, long before I ever thought of deliberately going out with field-glasses. I thought I was merely looking for eggs: peering ahead at the hedges as the dog-cart jogged along and the small birds flitted out; parting hollies and diving into gorse-bushes; letting myself down, projection by projection, over cliffs; studiously examining clumps of reeds on the edges of ponds and streams. I did not then know, being intent on the nests, how deeply the impressions of the birds were striking: blue pigeons, gaudy jays, incessantly-screaming gulls, bright-eyed thrushes sitting tenaciously on their nests, hosts of little gaping beaks in a globe of moss, the gay surrounding songs of the unattacked. The eggs were the prize and the collection the goal: at least I never stripped a nest. There, perhaps, lies the secret; *mediotutissimus ibis*. Unchecked, the birds would get out of hand; over-plundered, they would be extinguished. An awareness of this probably accounts for the fact that half the most ardent bird-lovers in England are also eager shots. They will shoot one kind of bird, which is very common or owes its existence to preservation, and they will no more think of shooting another kind than they would think of shooting their brothers and sisters. They will kill jays and even magpies, as poachers; but if these vermin (the term is not mine) were to become scarce they would be as indignant at the man who shot one as they now are

at a man who shoots a golden eagle (in England) or a chough. The Montagu Harrier is vermin in a sense; he massacres little birds, without a thought of their rarity; but he is uncommon and the law now protects him. I confess that some of my own most intimate experiences with birds have been obtained during shooting expeditions. It was on one of these last year that a friend of mine, surmounting a hedge and suddenly snap-shooting, brought down a nightjar thinking it was a snipe: the mistake was pardonable, and all he said was, "The damned fool ought to have migrated a month ago!" A day's shooting always brings one surprises. But there is nothing to equal an evening's shooting. Go to a duck-pond in wide marshes or moors as twilight falls in November or December. The sun sets, the moon rises; the faint mists begin to gather. You wait for the duck in total silence as the light on the water greys to steel and the barred clouds hang motionless. From a distant wood an owl hoots; invisible snipe flit mysteriously over the heather behind one; a flock of plover flashes momentarily past one's vision. It darkens still; the moon is obscured and it is almost too dark to see. Suddenly, from the direction of the wind, there is a faint whirring. The birds are unseen; there is a little splash and then the ghost of a quack. On such a night whether one shoots and kills or not, the realization comes over one that this is not merely a world of men,

but a world of animals who also have their own times and places and come and go mysteriously on their own business, thinking nothing of us until, with our unheralded explosions, we break into their world as earthquake and lightning break into ours. And not always calamitously; sometimes as a merciful release. Yesterday in the lane I came across a young rook with a damaged trailing wing. He allowed me at last to capture him; yawned at first, then was reconciled to the stroking hand. I could not bear to wring his neck, thicker and tougher than a partridge's; he was on terms with me and, anthropomorphically, I envisaged a sense of betrayal in him, poor sturdy young creature to whom something odd, but (for all he knew) temporary, had happened, and who had been taken up by a kind Providence which did not, apparently, mean to hurt him. I brought him home, shut him up in a crate while I put the gun together; let him out to flap across the yard, and then blew him to bits.

FOUR MEN

**J**AMES ELROY FLECKER was born in London (Lewisham) on November 5th, 1884. He was the eldest of the four children of the late Rev. W. H. Flecker, D.D., formerly Head Master of Dean Close School, Cheltenham. After some years at his father's school he went in 1901 to Uppingham, proceeding to Trinity College, Oxford, 1902. He stayed at Oxford until 1907 and then came to London, teaching for a short time in Mr. Simmons' school at Hampstead. In 1908 he decided to enter the Consular Service, and went up to Cambridge (Caius College) for the tuition in Oriental languages available there. He was sent to Constantinople in June 1910, was first taken ill there in August, and in September returned to England and went to a sanatorium in the Cotswolds. He returned to his post, apparently in perfect health, in March 1911; was transferred to Smyrna in April; and in May went on leave to Athens, where he married Miss Helle Skia-daressi, a Greek lady whom he had met in the preceding year. He spent three months' holiday in Corfu, and was sent to Beyrout, Syria, in September 1911. In December, 1912 he took a month's leave in England

and Paris, returning to Beyrout in January 1913. In March he again fell ill, and after a few weeks on the Lebanon (Brumana) he went to Switzerland, where, acting on his doctor's advice, he remained for the last eighteen months of his life. He stayed successively at Leysin, Montreux, Montana, Locarno, and (May 1914) Davos, where on January 3rd, 1915, he died. He is buried in Cheltenham at the foot of the Cotswold Hills.

His published books include:

Verse: *The Bridge of Fire* (Elkin Matthews, 1907), *Forty-two Poems* (Dent, 1911), *The Golden Journey to Samarkand* (Goschen, 1913, now published by Martin Secker), and *The Old Ships* (Poetry Bookshop, 1915).

Prose: *The Last Generation* (New Age Press, 1908), *The Grecians* (Dent, 1910), *The Scholar's Italian Grammar* (D. Nutt, 1911) and *The King of Alsanâer* (Goschen, 1914, now published by Allen and Unwin). He left also two unpublished dramas, *Hassan* and *Don Juan*,\* and a number of published and unpublished short stories, articles, and poems.

## 2

That is the bare outline of Flecker's life and work. The present Introduction does not pretend to supply a "personal memoir," for which materials have not been collected; and the work of estimating Flecker's art and "placing" him in relation to his contemporaries

\*These have since been published, as also a volume of letters.

may be left to others. But one may usefully give a few more biographical details and a short analysis of the poet's artistic attitude and methods of work.

In person Flecker was tall, with blue eyes, black, straight hair, and dark complexion. There was a tinge of the East in his appearance, and his habitual expression was a curious blend of the sardonic and the gentle. Until illness incapacitated him he was physically quite active, but his principal amusement was conversation, of which he never tired. He felt acutely the loss of good talk during his years abroad, in Syria especially. He was sociable, and enjoyed meeting and talking with crowds of people; but he had few intimate friends at Oxford, and, after he left England, little opportunity of making any. One of the few, Mr. Frank Savery, now of the British Legation, Berne, sends the following notes:

My acquaintance with him began in January 1901, when he was a lanky, precocious boy of sixteen, and lasted, with long interruptions, until his death. His fate took him to the Near East, mine took me to Germany: for this reason we never met from 1908 to 1914, though we never ceased to correspond. Largely because our intercourse was thus broken, I believe I am better able to appreciate the changes which his character underwent in the latter years of his life than those who never lost sight of him for more than a few months at a time.

It was at Oxford that I first came to know



him intimately. He was extraordinarily undeveloped, even for an English Public School boy, when he first went up in 1902. He already wrote verses—with an appalling facility that for several years made me doubt his talent. He imitated with enthusiasm and without discrimination, and, the taste in those long-gone days being for Oscar Wilde's early verse and Swinburne's complacent swing, he turned out a good deal of decadent stuff, that was, I am convinced, not much better than the rubbish written by the rest of his generation at Oxford. What interested me in Flecker in those days was the strange contrast between the man—or rather the boy—and his work. Cultured Oxford in general, I should add, was not very productive at that time: a sonnet a month was about the maximum output of the lights of Balliol. The general style of literature in favour at the time did not lend itself to a generous outpouring. Hence there was a certain piquancy in the exuberant flow of passionate verse which issued from Flecker's ever-ready pen in spite of his entire innocence of any experience whatever.

Furthermore, he was a wit—a great wit, I used to think, but no humorist—and, like most wits, he was combative. He talked best when someone baited him. At last it got to be quite the fashion in Oxford to ask Flecker to luncheon—and dinner-parties—simply in order to talk. The sport he afforded was usually excellent. . . . Looking back on it now, I believe I was right in thinking that in those days he had no humour (there is very little humour in Oxford); nor am I so entirely sure that his wit was bad. I had, at any rate, a growing feeling that, in spite of his

immaturity and occasional bad taste, he was the most important of any of us: his immense productiveness was, I vaguely but rightly felt, better and more valuable than our finicky and sterile good taste.

By 1906 he had developed greatly—largely thanks to the companionship of an Oxford friend whom, in spite of long absence and occasional estrangements, he loved deeply till the end of his life. Even his decadent poems had improved: poor as are most of the poems in *The Bridge of Fire*, they are almost all above the level of the Oxford poetry, and there are occasional verses which forecast some of his mature work. Thus I still think that the title-poem itself is a rather remarkable achievement for a young man and not without a certain largeness of vision. The mention of this poem reminds me of an episode which well illustrates the light-heartedness which at that time distinguished the self-styled “lean and swarthy poet of despair.” I was sitting with him and another friend in his rooms one day—early in 1906, I think—when he announced that he was going to publish a volume of poems. “What shall I call it?” he asked. We had made many suggestions, mostly pointless, and almost all, I have no doubt, indecent, when Flecker suddenly exclaimed: “I’ll call it *The Bridge of Fire*, and I’ll write a poem with that name and put it in the middle of the book instead of the beginning. That’ll be original and symbolic too.” We then debated the not unimportant question of what *The Bridge of Fire* would be about. At midnight we parted, the question still unsettled. Flecker, however, remarked cheerfully that it did not

much matter—it was a jolly good title and he'd easily be able to think of a poem to suit it.

Flecker always cherished a great love for Oxford: he had loved it as an undergraduate, and afterwards not even the magic of the Greek seas, deeply as he felt it, ever made him forget his first university town. But on the whole I think that Cambridge, where he went to study Oriental languages in preparation for his consular career, did more for him. I only visited him once there—in November 1908, I think—but I had the distinct impression that he was more independent than he had been at Oxford. He was writing the first long version—that is to say, the third actual draft—of the *King of Alsander*. Incidentally he had spoilt the tale, for the time being, by introducing a preposterous sentimental conclusion, a departure to unknown lands, if I remember rightly, with the peasant-maid, who had not yet been deposed, as she was later on, from her original position of heroine.

And now follow the years in which my knowledge of Flecker is drawn only from a desultory correspondence. I should like to quote from some letters he wrote me, but, alas, they are in Munich with all my books and papers. He wrote to me at length whenever he had a big literary work on hand; otherwise an occasional postcard sufficed, for he was a man who never put either news or gossip into his letters. I knew of his marriage; I knew that his literary judgment, as expressed in his letters and exemplified in his writings, had improved suddenly and phenomenally. That was all.

At last his health finally collapsed and he came to Switzerland. It was at Locarno, in May 1914,

that I saw him again. He was very ill, coughed continually, and did not, I think, ever go out during the whole fortnight I spent with him. He had matured even more than I had expected. . . .

He was very cheerful that spring at Locarno—cheerful, not extravagantly optimistic, as is the way of consumptives. I think he hardly ever mentioned his illness to me, and there was certainly at that time nothing querulous about him. His judgment was very sound, not only on books but also on men. He confessed that he had not greatly liked the East—always excepting, of course, Greece—and that his intercourse with Mohammedans had led him to find more good in Christianity than he had previously suspected. I gathered that he had liked his work as Consul, and he once said to me that he was proud of having been a good business-like official, thereby disposing, in his case at any rate, the time-honoured conception of the poet as an unpractical dreamer. He was certainly no mere dreamer at any period of his life; he appreciated beauty with extraordinary keenness, but, like a true poet, he was never contented with mere appreciation. He was determined to make his vision as clear to others as it was to himself.

I saw Flecker once more, in December 1914. He was already visibly dying, and at times growing weakness numbed his faculties. But he was determined to do two things—to complete his poem, *The Burial in England*, and to put his business affairs into the hands of a competent literary agent. The letters and memoranda on the latter subject which he dictated to me were admirably lucid, and I remember that, when I

came to read them through afterwards, I found there was hardly a word which needed changing.

One evening he went through the *Burial* line by line with Mrs. Flecker and myself. He had always relied greatly on his wife's taste, and I may state with absolute certainty that the only two persons who ever really influenced him in literary matters were the Oxford friend I have already mentioned and the lady whose devotion prolonged his life, and whose acute feeling for literature helped to a great extent to confirm him in his lofty ideals of artistic perfection.

Although he never really finished the longer version of the *Burial* which he had projected, the alterations and additions he made that evening—"Toledo-wrought neither to break nor bend" was one of the latter—were in the main improvements and in no way suggested that his end was so near. To me, of course, that poem must always remain intolerably sad, but, as I re-read it the other day, I asked myself whether the casual reader would feel any trace of the "mattress grave" on which it was written. Candidly I do not think that even the sharpest of critics would have known, if he had not been told, that half the lines were written within a month of the author's death.

His letters, as is remarked above, were generally business-like and blunt. I have found a few to myself: they are almost all about his work, with here and there a short, exclamatory eulogy on some other writer. He observes, in December 1913, that a journal which had often published him had given *The Golden*

*Journey* "an insolent ten-line review with a batch of nincompoops"; then alternately he is better and writing copiously, or very ill and not capable of a word. In one letter he talks of writing on Balkan Politics and Italy in Albania; in another of translating some war-poetry of Paul Déroulède's. Another time he is even thinking of "having a bang at the Cambridge Local Examination . . . with a whack in it at B. Shaw." Then in November 1914 he says: "I have exhausted myself writing heroic great war-poems." He might comprehensibly have been in low spirits, dying there in a dismal and deserted "health resort" among the Swiss mountains, with a continent of war-zones cutting him off from all chance of seeing friends. But he always wrote cheerfully, even when desperately ill. The French recovery filled him with enthusiasm; he watched the Near Eastern tangle with the peculiar interest of one who knew the peoples involved; and in one delicate and capricious piece of prose, published in a weekly in October, he recalled his own experiences of warfare. He had had glimpses of the Turco-Italian War: Italian shells over Beyrout ("Unforgettable the thunder of the guns shaking the golden blue of the sky and sea while not a breath stirred the palm-trees, not a cloud moved on the swan-like snows of Lebanon") and a "scrap" with the Druses, and the smoke and distant rumble of the battle of Lemnos, "the one effort of the Turks to

secure the mastery of the Ægean." These were his exciting memories:

To think that it was with cheerful anecdotes like these that I had hoped, a white-haired elder, to impress my grandchildren! Now there's not a peasant from Picardy to Tobolsk but will cap me with tales of real and frightful tragedy. What a race of deep-eyed and thoughtful men we shall have in Europe—now that all those millions have been baptized in fire!

Then in the first week of January 1915, he died. I cannot help remembering that I first heard the news over the telephone, and that the voice which spoke was Rupert Brooke's.

## 3

Flecker began writing verse early, and one of his existing note-books contains a number of poems written whilst he was at Uppingham. The original poems composed, at school and at Oxford, up to the age of twenty are not very remarkable. There is nothing unusual in some unpublished lines written on the school chapel bell at the end of his last term, and little in *Danæ's Cradle-Song for Perseus* (1902). A typical couplet is

Waste of the waves! O for dawn! For a long low  
level of shore!  
Better be shattered and slain on the reef than  
drift evermore.

Both rhythm and language are Tennysonian, and the alliterative Tennysonianism at the end of the first line is repeated in a *Song* of 1904 beginning:

Long low levels of land  
 And sighing surges of sea,  
 Mountain and moor and strand  
 Part my beloved from me.

A *Dream-Song* of 1904 is equally conventional, though in the lines

Launch the galley, sailors bold,  
 Prowed with silver, sharp and cold,  
 Winged with silk and oared with gold,

may be seen the first ineffective attempt to capture an image that in various forms haunted Flecker to the end of his life. But the most numerous and, on the whole, the best of his early poems are translations. And this is perhaps significant, as indicating that he began by being more interested in his art than in himself. Translating, there was a clearly defined problem to be attacked; difficulties of expression could not be evaded by changing the thing to be expressed; and there was no scope for fluent reminiscence or a docile pursuit at the heels of the rhyme. In 1900-1, *aet.* 16-17, he was translating Catullus and the *Per-vigilium Veneris*, and amongst the poets he attacked in the next few years were Propertius, Muretus, Heine, Bierbaum, of whose lyrics he translated several, one of which is given in this volume. This habit of trans-



lation, so excellent as a discipline, he always continued, amongst the poets from whom he made versions being Meleager, Goethe, Leconte de Lisle, Baudelaire, H. de Régnier, Samain, Jean Moréas, and Paul Fort. In the last year or two his translations were mostly made from the French Parnassians. What drew him to them was his feeling of especial kinship with them and his belief that they might be a healthy influence on English verse.

He explained his position in the preface to *The Golden Journey to Samarkand*. The theory of the Parnassians had for him, he said, "a unique attraction." "A careful study of this theory, however old-fashioned it may by now have become in France, would, I am convinced, benefit English critics and poets, for both our poetic criticism and our poetry are in chaos." Good poetry had been written on other theories and on no theories at all, and "no worthless writer will be redeemed by the excellence of the poetic theory he may chance to hold." But "that a sound theory can produce sound practice and exercise a beneficent effect on writers of genius" had been repeatedly proved in the history of the Parnasse.

"The Parnassian School" (he continued) "was a classical reaction against the perfervid sentimentality and extravagance of some French Romantics. The Romantics in France, as in England, had done their powerful work and infinitely widened the scope and

enriched the language of poetry. It remained for the Parnassians to raise the technique of their art to a height which should enable them to express the subtlest ideas in powerful and simple verse. But the real meaning of the term Parnassian may be best understood from considering what is definitely not Parnassian. To be didactic like Wordsworth, to write dull poems of unwieldy length, to bury like Tennyson or Browning poetry of exquisite beauty in monotonous realms of vulgar, feeble, or obscure versifying, to overlay fine work with gross and irrelevant egoism like Victor Hugo, would be abhorrent, and rightly so, to members of this school. On the other hand, the finest work of many great English poets, especially Milton, Keats, Matthew Arnold, and Tennyson, is written in the same tradition as the work of the great French school: and one can but wish that the two latter poets had had something of a definite theory to guide them in self-criticism. Tennyson would never have published *Locksley Hall* and Arnold might have refrained from spoiling his finest sonnets by astonishing cacophonies."

There were, he naturally admitted, "many splendid forms of passionate or individual poetry" which were not Parnassian, such as the work of Villon, Browning, Shelley, Rossetti, and Verlaine, "too emotional, individual, or eccentric" to have Parnassian affinities:

The French Parnassian has a tendency to use traditional forms and even to employ classical subjects. *His desire in writing poetry is to create beauty: his inclination is toward a beauty somewhat statuesque. He is apt to be dramatic and objective rather than intimate.*

The enemies of the Parnassians have accused them of cultivating unemotional frigidity and upholding an austere view of perfection. The unanswerable answers to all criticism are the works of Hérédia, Leconte de Lisle, Samain, Henri de Régnier, and Jean Moréas. Compare the early works of the latter poet, written under the influence of the Symbolists, with his *Stances* if you would see what excellence of theory can do when it has genius to work on. Read the works of Hérédia if you would understand how conscious and perfect artistry, far from stifling inspiration, fashions it into shapes of unimaginable beauty. . . . At the present moment there can be no doubt that English poetry stands in need of some such saving doctrine to redeem it from the formlessness and the didactic tendencies which are now in fashion. As for English criticism, can it not be learnt from the Parnassian, or any tolerable theory of poetic art, to examine the beauty and not the 'message' of poetry.

"It is not" (he said) "the poet's business to save man's soul but to make it worth saving. . . . However, few poets have written with a clear theory of art for

art's sake, it is by that theory alone that their work has been, or can be judged;—and rightly so if we remember that art embraces all life and all humanity, and sees in the temporary and fleeting doctrines of conservatives or revolutionary only the human grandeur or passion that inspires them.”

His own volume had been written “with the single intention of creating beauty.”

Though many of his own poems show the “tendency to use traditional forms and even to employ classical subjects,” Flecker did not, it must be observed, dogmatize as to choice of subject or generalize too widely. The Parnassians were not everything to him, nor were those older poets who had resembled them. It was as a corrective that he recommended the study of this particular group to his English contemporaries. It is arguable that most of his English contemporaries—one might instance Bridges and Yeats—are anything but chaotic, extravagant, careless, or didactic. References to the “latest writer of manly tales in verse” and “formlessness” might certainly be followed up; but formlessness and moralizing are not so universal amongst modern English writers as Flecker, making out his case, implied. It does not matter; there is not even any necessity to discuss the French Parnassians. Flecker had an affinity with them. He disliked the pedestrian and the wild; he did not care either to pile up dramatic horrors or to

burrow in the recesses of his own psychological or physiological structure. He liked the image, vivid, definite in its outline: he aimed everywhere at clarity and compactness. His most fantastic visions are solid and highly coloured and have hard edges. His imagination rioted in images, but he kept it severely under restraint, lest the tropical creepers should stifle the trees. Only occasionally, in his later poems, a reader may find the language a little tumultuous and the images heaped so profusely as to produce an effect of obscurity and, sometimes, of euphuism. But these poems, it must be remembered, are precisely those which the poet himself did not finally revise. Some of them he never even finished: *The Burial in England*, as it appears, is the best that can be done with a confusing collection of manuscripts, thoughts and second thoughts. He was, as he claimed, constitutionally a classic; but the term must not be employed too rigidly. He was, in fact, like Flaubert, both a classic and a romantic. He combined, like Flaubert, a romantic taste for the exotic, the gorgeous, and the violent, with a dislike for the romantic egoism, looseness of structure, and turgidity of phrase. His objectivity, in spite of all his colour, was often very marked; but there was another trend in him. Though he never wrote slack and reasonless *vers libres*, the more he developed the more he experimented with new rhythms; and one of his latest and best lyrics

was the intensely personal poem *Stillness*. He ran no special kind of subject too hard, and had no refined and restricted dictionary of words. A careful reader, of course, may discover that there are words, just as there are images, which he was especially fond of using. There are colours and metals, blue and red, silver and gold, which are present everywhere in his work; the progresses of the sun (he was always a poet of the sunlight rather than a poet of the moonlight) were a continual fascination to him; the images of Fire, of a ship, and of an old white-bearded man recur frequently in his poems. But he is anything but a monotonous poet, in respect either of forms, subjects, or language. It was characteristic of him that he should be on his guard against falling into a customary jargon. Revising *The Welsh Sea* and finding the word "golden," which he felt he and others had overdone, used three times (and not ineffectively) in it, he expunged the adjective outright, putting "yellow" in the first two places and "slow green" in the third. His preface on Parnassianism was whole-hearted; but any one who interpreted some of his sentences as implying a desire to restrict either the poet's field or his expression to a degree that might justifiably be termed narrow would be in error. In one respect, perhaps, his plea was a plea for widening; he did not wish to *exclude* the classical subject. And his declaration that poetry should not be written to

carry a message but to embody a perception of beauty did not preclude a message in the poetry. His last poems, including *The Burial in England*, may be restrained but are scarcely impersonal, may not be didactic but are none the less patriotic. He need not, in fact, be pinned to every word of his preface separately. The drift of the whole is evident. He himself, like other people, would not have been where he was but for the Romantic movement; but he thought that English verse was in danger of decomposition. He merely desired to emphasise the dangers both of prosing and of personal paroxysms; and, above all, to insist upon careful craftsmanship.

This careful craftsmanship had been his own aim from the beginning. "Libellum arido modo pumice expolitum" is a phrase in the first of the Catullus epigrams he translated at school; and whilst the content of his poetry showed a steadily growing strength of passion and thought, its form was subjected to, though it never too obviously "betrayed," an increasingly assiduous application of pumice-stone and file. His poems were written and re-written before they were printed; some were completely remodelled after their first publication; and he was continually returning to his old poems to make alterations in single words or lines. His changes at their most extensive may be seen in the development of *The Bridge of Fire*, in that of *Narcissus*, and in that of

*Tenebris Interlucentum.* As first published this ran:

Once a poor song-bird that had lost her way  
 Sang down in hell upon a blackened bough,  
 Till all the lazy ghosts remembered how  
 The forest trees stood up against the sky.  
 Then suddenly they knew that they had died,  
 Hearing this music mock their shadowed land;  
 And someone there stole forth a timid hand  
 To draw a phantom brother to his side.

In the second version, also of eight lines, each line is shorter by two syllables:

A linnet who had lost her way  
 Sang on a blackened bough in Hell,  
 Till all the ghosts remembered well  
 The trees, the wind, the golden day.  
 At last they knew that they had died  
 When they heard music in that land,  
 And some one there stole forth a hand  
 To draw a brother to his side.

The details of this drastic improvement are worth studying. The treatment of the first line is typical. The general word "song-bird" goes, the particular word "linnet" is substituted; and the superfluous adjective is cut out, like several subsequent ones. *Gravis Dulcis Immutabilis* was originally written as a sonnet; the *Invitation to a young but Learned Friend* was considerably lengthened after an interval of years; and the poet's own copies of his printed volumes are promiscuously marked with minor alterations and



re-alterations. One of the most curious is that by which the sexes are transposed in the song printed first as *The Golden Head* and then as *The Queen's Song*. The last four lines of the first stanza originally ran:

I then might touch thy face,  
           Delightful Maid,  
 And leave a metal grace,  
           A graven head.

This was altered into:

I then might touch thy face,  
           Delightful boy,  
 And leave a metal grace,  
           A graven joy.

The reasons for the alteration are evident. The sounds "ace" and "aid" are uncomfortably like each other; the long, lingering "oy" makes a much better ending of the stanza than the sound for which it was substituted; and the false parallelism of "metal grace" and "graven head" was remedied by eliminating the concrete word and replacing it by another abstract one on the same plane as "grace." Such a substitution of the abstract for the concrete word, sound enough here, is very rare with him; normally the changes were the other way round. He preferred the exact word to the vague; he was always on his guard against the "pot-shot" and the complaisant epithet which will fit in anywhere. With passionate deliber-

ation he clarified and crystallized his thoughts and intensified his pictures.

He found, as has been said, kinship in the French Parnassians: and though he approached them rather as a comrade than as a disciple, traces of their language, especially perhaps that of de R  gnier and H  r  dia, may be found in his later verse. A reading of H  r  dia is surely evident in the *Gates of Damascus*: in

Beyond the towns, an isle where, bound, a naked  
giant bites the ground:

The shadow of a monstrous wing looms on his  
back: and still no sound

and the stanzas surrounding it. An influence still more marked is that of Sir Richard Burton. Flecker, when still a boy, had copied out the whole of his long *Kasidah*, and its rhythms and turns of phrase are present in several of his Persian poems. It was in the *Kasidah* that Flecker found Aflatun and Aristu, and the refrain of "the tinkling of the camel bells" of which he made such fine use in *The Golden Journey*. The verse-form of the *Kasidah* is, of course, not Burton's, it is Eastern; and the use Flecker made of it suggests that infusion of Persian and Arabic forms into English verse might well be a fertilizing agent. He always read a great deal of Latin verse; Latin poetry was as much to him as Greek history, myth, and landscape. Francis Thompson, Baudelaire, and Swinburne were all early "influences." He learnt

from them, but he was seldom mastered by them. He did not imitate their rhythms or borrow their thought. The Swinburnian *Anapæsts*, written in a weak moment, were an exception. In Flecker's printed copy the title has first, in a half-hearted effort to save the poem whilst repudiating its second-hand music and insincere sentiments, been changed to *Decadent Poem*: and then a thick pencil has been drawn right through it. From his English contemporaries Flecker was detached. He admired some of them—W. B. Yeats, A. E. Housman, Walter de la Mare, and others; and with some he was friendly, especially Rupert Brooke, with whom he had been at Cambridge. Of Mr. Chesterton's *Flying Inn* he writes to me in January 1914: "A magnificent book—his masterpiece; and the humorous verse splendid." But his physical absence, first in the Levant and then in Switzerland, in itself prevented him from getting into any literary set, and his temperament and opinion of current tendencies was such that, even had he lived in England, he would probably have escaped "infection" by any school or individual. Flecker's vision of the world was his own; his dreams of the East and Greece were born with him. He knew the streets of Stamboul and the snows of Lebanon, and the caravans departing for Bagdad and the gates of Damascus, and the bazaars heaped with grapes and "coffee-tables botched with pearl and little beaten brass-ware pots"; but his hankering long

antedated his travels. There is an unpublished poem written when he was twenty in which voices call him "to white Ægean isles among the foam" and the "dreamy painted lands" of the East. In the same year he translated Propertius I, xx. His lifelong love of Greek names is shown by his enunciation of them even then:

But Oreithyia's sons have left him now:  
 Hylas, most foolish boy, where goest thou?  
     He is going to the Hamadryades,  
 To them devoted—I will tell you how.  
 There's a clear well beneath Arganthos' screes,  
 Wherein Bithynian Naiads take their ease,  
     By leafage overarched, where apples hide  
 Whilst the dew kisses them on the unknown trees.

This poem is dated 1904. It is the year of the Glion stanzas, the sonnet on Francis Thompson, and (probably) the fragmentary *Ode on Shelley*. It is the year, that is, when Flecker began to show marks of maturity.

Whatever may be said about the Collected Poems there are few which are not characteristic of the poet. His rigorous conception of his art and his fidelity to his own vision prevented many lapses, and he suppressed those which he did commit. One unrepresentative phrase there is which he seized on to give a very untrue description of him. In the Envoy to *The Bridge of Fire* he speaks of himself as "the lean and swarthy poet of despair." It meant nothing; the first poem in the same book, with its proclamation that "the most

surprising songs" must still be sung, and its challenge to youth to turn to "the old and fervent goddess" whose eyes are "the silent pools of Light and Truth" is far more characteristic of him, first and last. "Lean and swarthy poet" may stand; but not of despair. The beauty of the world was a continual intoxication to him; he was full, as a man, if not as a poet, of enthusiasms, moral and material, economic, educational, and military. Neither the real nor the spurious disease of pessimism is present in his verse and in his last autumn he was writing, with an energy that sometimes physically exhausted him, poems that blazed with courage, hope, and delight. Like his *Old Battleship* he went down fighting.

WHEN *Hassan*, nearly eight years after its author's death, was published, it was generally agreed that Flecker's friends had not exaggerated its merits as a stage-play. The one reservation which some of the critics made was that the latter part of it might be found in the theatre unbearably painful. *Hassan* began as a farce, and the development of Flecker's first idea into the play as we have it is interesting in itself and also as an example of the strange processes that go on in the minds of artists and above all perhaps, in the minds of artists who are writing for the stage.

The origin of the play—I am indebted to the poet's widow for this information—was as follows. On entering the Consular Service, it will be remembered, Flecker went first to Constantinople and then to Beirut in Syria. From June to August 1911, he spent three months' leave in Corfu, where he occupied himself chiefly in working for the Consular examinations in Turkish. He was in good health and his spirits were light; the scenery was beautiful and life seemed easy. He wrote a good deal. "In the cottage where we lived," writes Mrs. Flecker, "he used to spend long hours in the garden beneath a tall orange-tree, sitting

in a deep armchair, certainly a relic of the English occupation, watching, pen in hand, a small wood worm, a little brown hooded hermit that lived in the arm of the chair, come out of his den and set to pierce a new hole with his saw-beak." The poems he wrote there included *Yasmin*, *Saadabad*, *The Hamman Name*, *The Golden Journey*, *In Phœacia*, and *Oak and Olive*. Amongst the Turkish books he read was a small volume of farcical plays. One of these he translated. It related the adventures of one Hassan, a simple and credulous man, whose friends amused themselves by playing practical jokes upon him with the aid of a Hebrew magician. The magician struck Flecker's fancy and he sketched a short farce in which Zachariah the Jew and his philtres were the centre of interest. The manuscript no longer exists. The manner of it may be deduced from the opening of *Hassan*. Flecker had been reading with great delight Dr. Mardrus's French translation of the *Arabian Nights*: the lines inscribed on the title-page are an example of Mardrus's direct style and of the spirit in which Flecker conceived his comedy. There was a woman in the farce named Yasmin; and soon after he had written this little play he wrote *Yasmin: a Ghazel*, the lovely song which now appears in *Hassan* but which was originally composed without any reference to a dramatic setting. The name had suggested the song, the song suggested a play: for Flecker next thought of writing a three-act

comedy in which Yasmin was to be the chief feminine character. About the same time he wrote "A Diwan of the West," the poem published later under the title "Prologue," in which the Golden Journey to Samarkand first appears. In July this three-act comedy was sent to London to be typed, and the first act of the draft is before me as I write. It is covered with scrawls, for it became the basis of the ultimate play; and on the title-page the words "A Comedy in Three Acts" are scratched out and "A Play in Five Acts" substituted, the same substitution being made for "A Farce" on the next page. Here is the whole of this second title-page as it originally stood.

THE STORY OF HASSAN OF BAGDAD AND  
HOW HE CAME TO MAKE THE GOLDEN  
JOURNEY TO SAMARKAND.

A Farce.

"And he laughed so, he fell back upon his  
bottom."

*(Arabian Nights.)*

"He was seized with inextinguishable laughter."  
*(English translation of the same.)*

INTRODUCTION

The Caliph Haroun al Raschid.  
Jafar, his Vizier.  
Masrur, his Executioner.  
Ishak, his Singer and Companion.  
Hassan, a Confectioner.  
Selim, a friend of his.



Zachariah, a Jew Magician.

Tulip, a Negro Boy.

Yasmin, a widow Woman.

Splendour, a Lady.

Sugar Cane,

Palm-Branch, } her Maids.

Myrtle Blossom. }

Some of these characters disappeared before the final version was reached: Rafi and Pervaneh, around whose story the later play was to centre, are not here. The setting for the first scene was as it stands. Much of the original dialogue has been retained. The play opened as at present, but the conversation was between Hassan and Yakub, "his friend, stubbly beard, about same age, similar costume." Selim came in later; the final play gives Selim all Yakub's remarks, as well as his own, one "friend" serving instead of two friends.

Zachariah the Jew, in the play as we have it, never appears on the stage: Selim merely recounts his feats and goes off to get a philtre from him. In the original comedy Selim fetches Zachariah, "a tall bearded individual in a flowing gown embroidered with signs of the Zodiac and a square hat." The Jew asks an outrageous price for his potion; Hassan cannot pay it.

HASSAN. Woe is me. For if I sold all my possessions, my shop and my bed and my carpet and my new sugar boiler, that boileth swiftly, I could not amass one-fiftieth of that sum. Is there no help, O Master, for the children of the poor?

SELIM. O Venerable Zachariah, let me plead for my friend, for is it not written:

Do not shut the cupboard door:  
Give your pieces to the poor,  
Give them generously, or,  
When you lose your little store  
You may bitterly deplore  
That you shut that cupboard door.

ZACHARIAH. My son, the honey of your eloquence has sweetened the acrimony of your resolution. O born under an unhappy star, listen. For twenty pieces of gold, for twenty pieces only I will brew thy mistress a potion of black magic that shall bring her running to thy bed: and there, and thereupon thou shalt know the three delights of Paradise, which are Approach, Fulfilment and Renewal.

SELIM (to HASSAN). His mercy streams towards you like the splendour of the morning. Give Allah the praise, my son, and me the credit and him the dinars.

HASSAN. Eywallah! Twenty dinars.

SELIM (in scorn). Eywallah! Twenty dinars! Twenty dinars from the Prince of Passion! The price of a small cow for the love of Leila.

HASSAN. Eywallah! Twenty dinars is a monster sum for a very poor man. Complete your generosity, O master of miracles, and turn not my day to darkness for that which for you is a little and for me a lot.

ZACHARIAH. Twenty dinars, O parer of nutmegs, dost thou imagine I desire thy twenty dinars? They would not pay me for the bottle. But it is a law of magic that the philtre will not work for him who makes no sacrifice.

Hassan is sobered, declines to make the purchase and expresses doubts about the efficacy of the remedy. "Beware, Hassan," remarks Selim, "he may change thee into an ass and beat you round the city." Zachariah retires in dignity and telling Selim to bring Hassan to his house next day, when "by the God of Jacob I will make him fall flat on his belly in amazement and stupefaction . . . I dine with the Caliph, Farewell." Yasmin knocks on the door as in the present text, and the rest of the act has been little altered.

No more survives. During his sojourn in Syria, Flecker often thought of turning the rather crude comedy into something more elaborate. Apart from everything else, the old light fantasia was no longer to his mood. The burning sky of the East threw everything into hard relief; the human world around him was pitilessly real, his nerves were on edge and he felt estranged. His health broke down; he went to the Hôtel Belvedere at Leysin; and there, in enforced leisure, he took up *Hassan* again with extraordinary energy and passion. The play as we have it, in fact, was composed amid the horrors of Alpine health-resorts, where hundreds of invalids are crowded together in hideous buildings under a glare as crude as that of the East. It expressed a mood which was engendered by cruel realities. In *Hassan* Flecker found an outlet for his thoughts; a refuge he sometimes

found in the pure and tranquil beauty of his lyrics of this period, such as *The Blue Noon* and *The Old Ships*. In four or five weeks of July and August 1913, the play was completely remodelled, and most of what we now possess was written, and the "Golden Journey" was appended as epilogue. In the earlier play there had been a bare mention of a slave-girl Leila who had been stolen from the King of the Beggars for the Caliph's harem. Flecker's imagination fastened on this girl and this episode, no doubt lightly invented in the beginning, and there came into being all the story of Rafi and Pervaneh, and in that story an image of the immense cruelty and courage and beauty of life, a tragic vision that demanded and indeed compelled all the deepest sincerity of the poet's nature for its embodiment. When the play was finished it was seen by one or two actor-managers and ultimately reached Mr. Basil Dean, then sub-director to Beerbohm Tree at His Majesty's. Mr. Dean asked Flecker to shorten it for the stage. The request found Flecker and his wife at Montana, above the Rhône Valley. The poet had a bad relapse at Christmas 1913, and spent nearly three months in bed, during which time he cut down his text with unsparing bravery. In March 1914 he went to Locarno and in May to Davos, where the work of revision was proceeded with and a scenario written, embodying various changes for the stage version.

Towards the end of 1914, after the outbreak of the war, he received from Mr. Dean a proposed stage-version. He was reassured to find that several of his cuts had been reinstated and especially delighted that the ghost-scene, which he had feared no producer would tolerate, was thought possible. In detail he was only able to examine the first act; but he was pleased at the respectful handling of his text.

The manuscript, like all Flecker's manuscripts, is a mass of corrections. Almost every sentence has been amended—his alterations were invariably improvements—and several long episodes have been completely scrapped. These, however good, all went with excellent reason; the play would be the worse were any of them restored. The scene in Rafi's house has been very much reduced; both in large and in little, Flecker's compressions, his squeezings out of water from sentence and page, are admirable, briskness being gained with every change. The first scene of the next act has also been drastically cut, good but too ruminative conversation between Hassan and the Caliph being sacrificed. One example may be given of a passage as it was (though this after many verbal alterations) and as it is. Certain sentences ran thus:

CALIPH. Surely you are of gentle birth and do not know your true origin. For how should a confectioner acquire the art of verse. Wherefore should a confectioner decorate his wall with a

Bokhara carpet. In gems and miniatures and broidered silks I tested you at the Palace and you were surely a connoisseur. But never have I seen a man like you for poetry and carpets. When you tread on a carpet, you drop your eyes to earth to catch the pattern; and when you hear a poem, you raise your eyes to the stars to hear the tune.

HASSAN. No mystery, Master, attended thy servant's birth. My father was a confectioner, and his father too. If thou doubtest, look at me. Also have I the stature, the grace, the outline of nobility?

CALIPH. But whence your poetry—and whence your carpets? Have you had a great teacher?

HASSAN. Master, I have not sat at the feet of the wise nor sucked honey from the lips of philosophers. But as for Poetry, I have learnt to read and I have loved to hear.

In the final version for print all this was brought down to:

CALIPH. What a man you are for poetry and carpets! When you tread on a carpet, you drop your eyes to earth to catch the pattern; and when you hear a poem, you raise your eyes to heaven to hear the tune. Whoever saw a confectioner like this! When did you learn poetry, Hassan of my heart?

HASSAN. In that great school, the Market of Bagdad. . . .

The scene in Hassan's pavilion was longer to the extent of an amusing episode. Hassan had his own

Bokhara carpet brought to him from his house; its modest beauty did not blend with the gorgeousness of the Caliph's presents, but Hassan fought down objections with "Roll up the Isfahani. What is harmony of colours to the presence of a friend?" A long cut in the great Palace scene lopped a strand from the plot. As the play stands, Selim is never seen again after his disgraceful triumph over Hassan on Yasmin's balcony; we become well acquainted with him in the first Act and then he vanishes. Probably, in the original comedy, he remained an important character throughout; but only the opening scenes of the original comedy remain. There was no natural place for Selim in the later scenes of the play that ultimately grew out of the comedy; but Flecker did originally bring him in. He made him join the Beggars' rising and, in the Caliph's Hall, appeal to Hassan to obtain pardon for him. The Caliph gave Hassan the opportunity should he choose to take it; and Hassan, arguing with himself that it was unfair to the other doomed Beggars that one of their number should escape their fate, especially a rascal like Selim, refused to redeem him with the necessary word. Later on, this weighed on his conscience and the knowledge that he had sent an old friend to his doom made him wretched. The whole of this incident Flecker excised. He was probably aware that he had invented it merely in order to bring Selim in again and add

another complication to the plot; he must certainly have realised that it weakened the appeal of Hassan to our sympathies and that he had loaded Hassan with enough tragedy without that; he may even have been doubtful whether the Hassan of his creation would have acted thus either from frigid logic or from long-cherished anger. At all events many pages of effective writing were struck out at a blow and the play greatly clarified and strengthened as a result. One more convolution of the plot was struck out. There was a passage in which the Caliph, at the last moment before the torture and death of Rafi and Pervaneh, told Hassan that if he really was so agonised by their sufferings, he could reprieve them by volunteering to take their place, thereby securing an immortality in poetry. Flecker wisely cut this out, knowing that it must impair the terrible grandeur of his direct conclusion, and that the rejection by Hassan of so intolerable an alternative would throw no new light whatever on his character, whilst diminishing, unfairly as it were, its attractiveness.

Flecker himself (writing to Mr. Frank Savery) said: "The part of the play that thrills me most is the ghosts—and don't you think the effect of the poem at the end should be grand. I love my ghosts—I suppose because my poetic soul loves the picturesque in the play above everything." That is how he saw it when standing outside it and visualizing it as a theatrical



construction: and certainly in *Hassan* there are to be found some of the loveliest and most terrible spectacles which an English poet has ever imagined for the stage. But if, thinking of his achievement of beauty for the senses, of that realization in colour and sound which he was never to see and hear, he talked of the grandeur of such effects, he knew well enough that into the tragic issue of his play he had poured "exultations, agonies," passionate love and aspiration, torments which he was brave enough to face even if he could not master them: that he had registered here a struggle with the inexorable, and such dreams of the spirit as ring in Pervaneh's cry after her appalling and magnificent choice: "Hark! Hark!—down the spheres—the Trumpeter of Immortality! 'Die lest I be shamed, lovers. Die, lest I be shamed.' "

## HENRY WHEELER

IN a letter which he wrote me on January 16th, 1919, from Dublin, Henry Wheeler said:

If you get to the Bibliographical Society General Meeting on Monday, and if there should be any announcement thereat as to the printing of the Wadham Catalogue, will you let me have a line? If nothing is said, I shan't expect to hear, as I know how furiously busy you are.

Whether or not anything was said on this occasion I have forgotten. At all events, the Society, which had been for some time considering the publication of his work, finally decided that it could not, the Catalogue being of too "local" an interest. Within a few months Wheeler was dead. Now, years later, means have at last been found for the publication of the only enduring work of a man who, had he not died in youth, would have shown himself both brilliant and sagacious, not only as a bibliographer. He had, for instance, a great picaresque book in him. Not one of his friends will doubt this; nobody else, perhaps, could be expected to believe it.

Henry Albert Wheeler was born at Eastleigh, Hants, on September 20th, 1887, and went up to Wadham

College, Oxford, in 1906. At Oxford, like many men of literary proclivities before and since, he read more widely in general literature than in books useful for examination purposes—though he worked hard enough to take a Second Class in Greats and to pass into the Home Civil Service at the end of his Oxford career. I did not know him then, but knowledge of him later, combined with conversations with himself and his friends, make it easy enough for me to form a picture of his undergraduate life. Never at any time was he a man of numerous semi-friendships. He rowed, and knew the people in his boat; beyond that, his friendships were few but deep, and mostly with men of an original turn of mind and unconventional habits. At Oxford, as later, he had an enormous acquaintance amongst people of a social class lower than his own. The University regulations were not made to fit such a man. There was not a single tavern in Oxford or the neighbourhood, however small and secluded, where he had not repaired now and again, a tall, dark, Scholar-Gypsy; later on one could go with him to the most curious places in Oxford, in London, and on the Thames water-side, up-river, and find that he always knew the landlords and frequenters, male and female—hawkers, bookmakers, game-keepers, gypsies, boat-builders, retired sea captains, all the sort of characters in whose conversation can be found raciness, popular wisdom, and that sort of

candour which is killed by the good manners of the superior ranks of society. With such people Wheeler was always instantly on good terms; he seldom did much of the talking, having a slight stammer, being very modest, and being also intensely curious about the workings of the human mind, and always on the look-out for amusing things which would entertain himself and his friends later. He contrived to be a kind of vagrant when at Oxford; he even managed to be something of a vagrant in the Civil Service. One of his consolations, when in the Customs House, was the fact that Burns had been in the same employ and that there were documents there signed by, or referring to, that very untypical Civil Servant.

I first met him, I think, in the autumn of 1911 in the smoking-room of a London club, with one of his Oxford friends. At first sight I was more interested than attracted. He lay back in a chair, very long, very thin, very languid, talking unorthodoxies in what I thought a superior manner. He had a most extraordinary head and face. The head was long and narrow beyond any head I ever saw, though each feature was drawn out in such perfect proportion that he was extremely good-looking. A high forehead; beautifully arched eyebrows which seemed a vast distance above the dark, brilliant, heavily lidded eyes; pronounced cheek-bones; over-flushed hollow cheeks; a long, thin, slightly aquiline nose with

sensitive nostrils; a mouth drooping at the corners, and usually slightly open; and a clean-cut, determined chin gave him an appearance of self-confidence and even superciliousness which quite absurdly belied him. When I left him the first time I did not know that we should ever meet again; within a few weeks a friendship had been founded which was bound to last until one of us died. For a time, in 1913, he lived with us on Chiswick Mall; then he moved to Strand-on-the-Green; then he married and went to live over the tow-path at Putney. Wherever he was we seldom missed seeing each other for more than a few days. And Sunday morning a hail might come from the river, and I would go to look out of my window, and see, through overhanging branches, a skiff, sculls, and a lean figure in a zephyr who would shout arrangements for dinner that evening, or lunch next day, and a trip to a second-hand bookshop. Having his company, I never dreamed of better. He spoke slowly and carefully and hesitatingly in a quiet tenor: with a gift for full-flavoured precision which I have never known excelled. Often I used to go down to the Customs House where he was employed and fetch him out. Our opening remarks would generally run on these lines:

s.: Hallo! What have you been doing this morning?

w.: D-d-dog licences in Cumberland.

Then we would have a rapid snack and a tour of the local inns or the hawkers' barrows in the Whitechapel Road. Under my eyes there, he one day picked up for a shilling a large and fine copy, full of woodcuts, of a book printed by Richard Pynson.

If such a thing were there he was bound to get it and not I. He seemed to have an uncanny instinct which made his hand go straight for the one rarity on a shelf even when it was some little book with an insignificant modern binding on it. There was a shop in the East End that we both of us haunted for years. It has probably been tidied up by now. Two very philosophical, laconic, fair-minded, sedentary brothers had inherited a cob-webbed shop with an immense stock from a father whose tastes were more bookish than their own. The stock had grown and grown until it was quite unmanageable. The cellar was piled six feet deep in books; one had to go down there with a candle or an electric torch and force a passage through them; even a spade would have been handy. Upstairs was a long room stretching back from a narrow frontage, with crammed shelves reaching to the ceiling, and a sort of mound, or Long Barrow, of books running from front to back of the shop in the middle. Here, at any moment of the day, one brother or the other might be found sitting at the back of the shop on a great heap of books, bowler-hatted, moustached, rubicund, smoking his pipe, waiting for

customers to approach him with possible purchases in their hands, and willing to accept any reasonable offer. I often went there alone and picked up many early-printed books and volumes of old verse, valuable in more than one way. In the evening Wheeler would probably come round. I would show him my find. It was seldom indeed that he had not already seen the book; even when it had come from the innermost and lowest recesses of one of Messrs. X's mounds or pyramids of books, I seldom produced anything which Henry Wheeler had not already seen. Very often the finds were his rather than mine; for he had seen something which he considered "off his beat" and told me about it. Often we went there together; and it was extraordinary to see him step quietly up a ladder, pick some obscure little pamphlet out of a shelf, bring it down, and purchase it for a few shillings. I remember one occasion in particular when from somewhere near the ceiling he detached a little black-letter volume which proved to be a collection of Henry the Eighth's Statutes, which I believe is still absent from the British Museum's set. He died at thirty-one; he had very little money; he was unable to buy a tenth of the things that he would have liked to have bought. Yet he picked up obscure works by people like Crashaw even out of catalogues. Catalogues were propped up against the cruet when he had breakfast; more catalogues, or perhaps bibliographies,

were his staple reading in the train. In his short career as a collector he accumulated an immense knowledge of obscure and anonymous books; and he was aided by the sort of memory which enabled him to say at once whether a book should or should not have a portrait or a half-title simply because he had once, years before, seen it described in a catalogue.

Before writing this little tribute to his memory I searched my house for letters from him. Most of his letters seem to have disappeared. A few scraps are all that I can find. I will quote one or two of these simply to give an indication, as it were, of his tone of voice. In 1912 he was suddenly annoyed by somebody writing an article called *The Ideal Pub*. He wrote and told me. I was then on a weekly, now dead; and he proposed to reply. The postscript to the letter ran:

P.S. I have not been able to think of a title unless it be *A Pub-Crawler's Complaint against Idealists and Others*, which is rather long. If you accept the essay, call it what you like.

Here is a whole letter, written in the last year of his life, 1919:

Your letters were gratefully received. Though I am still in bed, I confidently hope that I am now on the verge of being let out of it by the end of this week, and am keenly supporting the theory of Friday's *Daily News* that this is the third of the three waves of which epidemics consist. As I have been a case in each of them,



and twice extra, I should have a good chance of immunity if the theory were true.

I was not surprised to hear of the big programme of Bibliog. Soc's. publications; it means books for us anyhow, though some of them might be more interesting than a Register of Middle English Verse. I am now for the first time in temporary occupation of a copy of Dyce's edition of Skelton, which is giving me great amusement and discloses some quite fine hymns, as well as satires. The official laureate poems are of course dull, and I have not tried the interludes; but some of the rest of the verse is a real surprise. Dyce, needless to say, has good notes. Buy a copy if you ever see one cheap; £3 or £4 is sometimes asked, if not more. These two last months are unique among those of my last five years; during them I have bought no book, tho' I have been more than once on the verge of getting McKerrow's *Printers' Marks* to cheer the long hours. I should have them pretty well by heart by the time I was in full flight again, and that would be a solid good. But doctors', chemists' and nurses' bills have, so far, turned the edge of my resolution.

I am comfortably supplied with ordinary literature, but if you should have *Boom* by Wm. Caine, I should like a loan of it. I have been through a good heap of his others with lots of amusement. I have been having a strong burst of Trollope and am now making a second complete run through Peacock—all profitable.

With love to E. and the Cygnine youth (recent study of Milton).

Yours ever,

It is a very curious thing, but I did ultimately come across a copy of Dyce, priced not at a few shillings, but at one dollar, in a bookshop, in a back street in Washington, D.C. (no less), two years after—and brought it back to England. This letter, incidentally, illustrates two things. One is that to the author of the Wadham Catalogue, bibliographer though he was, books were primarily things to be read; and the other is the catholicity of his taste. The letter was written from Dublin. In another letter he writes:

I am expecting to see Magee, alias Eglinton, shortly, almost my sole acquaintance among the literati here, and thro' him I can have a free run in the National Library without formality of application for books. He is an agreeable man.

He was in Dublin. He came back to England and spent his last months in the country in Hampshire. His wife nursed him devotedly. His letters were serenely cheerful to the end. One of his last visitors said: "I feel when I come out of Henry's room as if I had been conversing with some saint." Then on August 4th, 1919, "he woke from quiet sleep and was gone in a few moments. He spent yesterday afternoon lying outside his hut in the fresh air, watching the birds." That was the last news I had of one of the most gentle and charitable souls I have ever known, a wit devoid of cynicism, an intellectual who was loved

by some very ordinary people, a scholar free from pedantry.

His Wadham Catalogue was mostly compiled in the previous year. He was repeatedly rejected from the army during the war, and in 1918 he ultimately had to go on indefinite leave of absence (though I don't think he ever quite knew how ill he was) and settled for some months in Oxford. The work as it stands is not finally revised, but we thought it better to leave it as it left his hands, and to apologize for any slips which he might have corrected. There are some entries in it which were in no Wadham catalogue before he came: books bound up with other books, and, in one instance, a rare fragment of fifteenth-century English printing found in the binding of some quite uninteresting work. He told me about all his discoveries; characteristically, he does not disclose them in his catalogue. Reader, take them for granted.

## THE LAST OF JOHN FREEMAN

JOHN FREEMAN was born at Dalston on January 29th, 1880, and died at 29, Weigh-ton Road, Anerley, on September 23rd, 1929, aged forty-nine. For the last sixteen years of his life he had known that death might come at any time, owing to the weakness of his heart. Before the war a doctor told him he might live only a few months: the diagnosis was confirmed by several Army doctors from 1914 onwards. Some of his friends knew this: others probably guessed it. The only time I remember his saying anything to me about it was shortly after the outbreak of war. The inevitable topic turned up in our conversation, and he said he had just tried to enlist (I think—he was tall—as a private in the Grenadier Guards!) and that the doctors had rejected him at once. "Is your sight so bad as that?" I asked. "No," he replied, with a shy smile, in which neither self-pity nor anxiety was apparent, "my heart."

Few "facts" about his exterior life need be stated. He went to work in London as a boy. He married, in 1902, Miss Gertrude Farren, and they had two daughters. His friendships were not numerous, but they were very firm; he knew, and was admired by,

most of his contemporaries who were poets, his earliest associates among writers being, I believe, Edward Thomas, Mr. de la Mare, and Mr. Roger Ingpen. His first volume was *Twenty Poems*, published in 1909 and long ago out of print. Then followed *Fifty Poems*, *Stone Trees*, *Presage of Victory*, *Memories of Childhood*, *Poems New and Old*, *Music*, *The Grove*, *Prince Absalom*, *Solomon and Balkis*, *Collected Poems* (1928); and four prose volumes—*The Moderns*, *A Portrait of George Moore*, *English Portraits*, and the *Herman Melville* in the English Men of Letters Series. For the volume of *Collected Poems* the whole body of his verse was severely winnowed: but the selection was well made, and may be commended without reserve. He who finds spiritual and intellectual beauty, passion, and power of language in that volume will of his own motion proceed to the other books, which include two long narrative poems. He who does not need concern himself with Freeman no more.

Freeman, except privately from his brethren in the craft, had very little recognition in his lifetime. He was awarded the Hawthornden Prize in 1920, and his later books, as they appeared, were respectfully reviewed in such papers as take any notice at all of poets who are neither cheap, nor violent, nor eccentric, nor very aged. How secluded had been his working life was illustrated by the newspaper obituaries when

he died. It seemed to be commonly, if very dimly, known that he was a person of importance, and laudable attempts were made to do him something that would look like justice. But there was nothing about him in the works of reference, his books were evidently not at hand for serviceable quotation, and in more than one great journal he was confused with another man of the same name who had written novels. That nothing appeared about the career which maintained him was not merely comprehensible but eminently pardonable, for so quiet and reticent was Freeman that people who knew him for years had only the vaguest notion as to his profession.

Yet one of the most outstanding and notable facts about him is that he had a remarkable business career, which was unknown to the Press and seldom mentioned to his friends. At the age of thirteen he entered the service of the Liverpool Victoria Friendly Society: when he died he had risen to the very top of this great organization, and was Secretary, Director, and (in the words of a colleague) "the Chief Executive Officer directing very successfully and efficiently the operations of a staff of over 7,000 engaged in the business of Industrial and National Health Insurance with many millions of contracts and funds of £20,000,000." There are other such men, able, energetic, reliable, with great gifts for organization and negotiation. But they are seldom contemplative

poets—even though in this instance fancy does suggest that the qualities which served Freeman well in business are evident also in his writing. And, stranger still was his capacity for shutting his mind completely, when away from his calculations, committees, and conferences, against business affairs. Half his friends never knew exactly what he did: they thought of him as a literary man who earned his living by some vague job at a desk in the City. He himself—who might, indeed, had he had a chance in early years, have been by choice a professional writer—deprecated inquiry into the matter, and spoke of the daily work he so faithfully performed as a necessary drudgery. He would preside at committees, confer with officials, do all the routine work of a busy man of affairs. Then, tall, angular, spectacled, clean-shaven, large-eyed, full-lipped, dressed more like a clerkly poet than a director, he would take the train home to his suburb by the Crystal Palace, read an old or a new book, and lapse easily into the composition of quiet poetry, joyful, resigned, or full of

Over and over and over and over again  
The same hungry thoughts and the hopeless  
same regrets.

No regret did he ever in talk inflict upon his friends. His troubles were his own; only other people's troubles were worth discussion. And other people's books. I never knew him obtrude anything he had himself

written: but he was constantly begging his friends to examine meritorious works by the unknown young or the neglected middle-aged, which he thought might usefully be made known to the public. He helped, gratuitously, eagerly, and privately, to make reputations for men nothing like as good as himself. If a few were willing to read his verse, and there were an editor or two willing to let him contribute poems and occasional criticism, he was as content as a man could be who had a poet's capacity for mental suffering and a weak heart which, for sixteen years before his death, was at any time liable to break down and kill him.

Freeman died at Anerley. His wish was that his body should lie in a country churchyard; and on the afternoon of Friday, September 29th, in still sunshine, he was buried at Thursley, in the south-western corner of Surrey. The church is in part Saxon; secluded, and on a hill which looks northward across the commons to the Hog's Back. It is in the heart of Cobbett's country, and the farms, lanes, and woods round it are familiar to the reader of the *Rural Rides*. Years ago, in an essay on Cobbett, Freeman referred to a passage in which the lusty old pilgrim described one of his rides to "this beautiful village of Thursley" and said, "A prettier ride I never had in the course of my life. It was not the less interesting from the circumstance of its giving me all the way a full view



of Crooksbury Hill." Within view of Crooksbury, with its crest of pines, the earth for an age will cover Freeman's discarded shell. But little did he care about that corporal dust; none but a pagan could. When a man asks to be buried in such a place as this, the impulse which prompts him does not proceed from a care for outworn flesh and bone which never were awake and never could enjoy such a blessedness as sleep. It derives from a deep desire to mingle his memory, in others' minds, with things that he loved and that may speak for his faith and affections better than he ever could speak for them himself. Standing by the grave of a poet who chooses such a burial as this it is though one heard the dead speaking: "Look about you and there is a poem of which I wrote only dim fragments, a poem made of wide sky, of cloud-shadows over wood and moorland and far lines of trees, of farms, cornfields and cattle, of ancient cottages and a steeple over trees, of great old elms and mossy stone walls, grass, fresh daisies and withered cut flowers. Bird-song is here and the hum of bees in the silence of sunny afternoons, and a bell as the evening brightness fades, and the sound of country worship and the light of country lamps, and darkness falling over the mounds and the lichened memorials of men who knew older wars and older sciences, yet were blood of our blood. Here, where I lie, think of all these, of the recurrence of seasons and the love-

liness of the earth, and the transience of men—a multitude of visible and invisible things which gave my senses delight, shed on my heart a pure joy, or moved me to a solitary and untroubled contemplation, a world of symbols of acceptance and the day's content, of the assuagement of sorrow and the end of strife." Much of John Freeman's verse is a mirror of such things: but much is the record of suffering and dark struggle with enemies within and without, from which such things are a refuge. It was no simple pastoral poet who wrote of Poetry and the inscrutable universe:

If there were worse ills than Death to dream of,  
Worse pangs than hunger's and the numbèd  
    sense,

If even the long foul solitude of the grave  
Ended not other griefs of other men,  
And other fears; even then

Poetry needs must breathe through lips of man  
Desperate defiance and immortal courage,  
Needs must hope bicker in his burning eye,  
And Death and hunger, madness and despite,  
Sink sullenly from sight.

A casual peruser of Freeman's poems might think that he was chiefly occupied in writing about trees: the more familiar one grows with his work the more sure one becomes that his lasting hold will depend (apart from his achievements as a grave and cunning craftsman) on those parts of his poetry which are

concerned with the eternal abstractions and their visible workings, in which he shows his knowledge of the human heart and his rare candour in revealing it. Not that he was of the eager self-disclosers. The core of his poetry is sometimes hung round with veils, which can only be lifted by those who already know, through community of experience, what is behind them.

Freeman was never, and probably never will be, a widely read poet. He did not shine in popular narrative: he was serious, and did not yield his whole secret at first glance; he gave few concessions to our frailty in the form of luxurious images, strong visual descriptions, obviously infectious music, or fine detachable platitudes. The result of his gravity and surface reticence, as well as the nature of his subjects, was reinforced by the retirement of his private life and his abstinence from public appearances as from miscellaneous writing in the newspapers. He will be read by more people now than when he was alive; alive his chief readers were his brother-poets. He was apparently content that that should be so. Yet there must be many who would find a perpetual spring of inspiration, solace, and delight in him did they but make the intellectual effort to get thoroughly in touch with him which the best of his work demands.

The collection of *Last Poems* includes only one or two which had ever appeared in print before. John

Freeman, considering how full of business his life was, was a prolific poet: but he was also a careful one, and his desk when he died contained a large number of manuscripts, dating from all periods of his writing life, which were unfinished, or for which he still meditated a final polishing, or of which he had postponed publication because of their very intimacy of revelation. Not all of these manuscripts were easily decipherable, and some were crammed into the strangest little bits of paper: but the utmost pains have been taken to secure faithful transcripts. Where it appears to the reader that there are roughnesses and imperfections in the *Last Poems* let him hesitate to think the author's ear suddenly defective, for the author had not, in many instances, done with them. I conceive, for example, that there was much to be added to the "Willow Pool," the existing verses of which promise a work not only psychologically complicated but more powerfully dramatic than Freeman's narratives sometimes were. At the same time let him believe that Freeman's literary "trustees" have printed nothing which they do not think worth printing.

Uneven they naturally are, but I think that there are to be found there beautiful examples of all his main types. It was only to be expected that, in so far as he was known to an audience beyond the circle of his professional and habitual admirers, it was through his directer "nature poems" and, in the

Wordsworthian phrase, his "Poems of the Domestic Affections," especially the *Memories of Childhood*; it was the Patmore of *The Angel in the House*, who reached the general public, not the Patmore of the Odes. In his last collection there are several characteristic lyrics of simpler kind: the *Mozartian Air* has the sweet rippling motion of such an air of Mozart's, and is as clear, and the presences of Freeman's old companions, the trees, slender and flexible or massive and steadfast, are everywhere. But, I think, a more than usually large proportion of these "new" poems are burdened with thought, profounder, more intricate, more illuminated by insight, more turbid with perplexity than those others. For Freeman, though commonly regarded as a "nature poet" in so far as he was commonly regarded at all, was always—and the longer he lived, increasingly so—a poet who brooded over all life and his own heart, a man tormented by evil and resolved to face it a speculative thinker who contemplated all history and its meaning, an honest analyst who examined without flinching the world of human relations, and, at whatever expense of suffering and shame, the tangled conflict of principle and instinct, of selfishness and unselfishness, of commonsense and obstinate hankering, within himself. He had come, in his last years, to middle age, that period of life in which a man has lost his illusions, and must either take refuge in

cynicism or some other admission of defeat, or, as bravely and clear-sightedly as he may, newly confront an outer and an inner existence from which the veils of youthful dreaming have been torn, a human world which cannot be as rapidly or as fundamentally changed as youth imagined, a world of inexplicable evil, interminable struggle, and irreconcilable needs and "rights," a world in which "we mortal millions live alone," and even between lovers there is warfare. With that warfare Freeman was acquainted, the wrestling not merely of individual with individual, but of sex with sex, the man and the woman (each in bewilderment trying, with blind inability, to comprehend, or incredulous refusal to admit, the enduring differences between their bodies and minds), to wrest the other, for love's sake as well as self's and, pathetically, for reason's, to his or her modes and habits of intellect and sense. He never wore his heart upon his sleeve, but those who are fit to find the key may find it, and when they do they will discover that, except only the late Robert Bridges, he was love's truest scholar amongst all modern poets. Were all his love poetry assembled Swinburne's words might far more aptly be applied to it than to Gautier's scented novel: "This is the golden book of spirit and sense." The deepest abysses of Love's hell he had plumbed, and, for such a man, the blackest of all, where abides the agony of self-reproach:

Harsh words too cruelly sped, yet thoughts  
 unspoken,  
 Long angry silences, yet too soon broken,  
 O, deep and dark despairs, fondness perverse,  
 Self-aimed, self-wounding, wounding you the worse  
 Who loved and love; deeper dividing pride  
 Burning and burning Love undeified,  
 Degraded Love. . . . O thou unmerciful mind  
 That being in me must needs be so unkind,  
 Unmatched for inhumanity. . . .

But his pilgrimage of spirit and sense was not incomplete. Every doubt, craving, jealousy, sullenness, resentment known to lovers was familiar to him, all the unachieved communions of the brain and all the frustrated desires of the insatiable flesh: and every experience was to him, it may be, peculiarly intense, because of the imminent shadow of death which overhung him, lending a deeper gloom to discontent and a sharper edge to joy. Yet he knew the ultimate peace and happiness of love, the haven after storm, that last quickening of perception, that harmony through the oblivion of self, which come to the steadfast lover when maturity has grown accustomed to truth, and the humble heart, in which alone there is no sex, cries in astonishment, "If this be love, I never loved till now." Such bliss can never be more than intermittent:

Yet ever and anon the trumpets sound  
 From the hid battlements of eternity  
 Those shaken mists a space unsettle, then  
 Round the half-glimpsèd turrets slowly wash again.

We are chained to our mortal parts, and till death comes there is no release from them. But he must be counted a happy man who has once known that consummation and whose heart has once been flooded by that light.

Freeman thought persistently and felt acutely: he was one of those rare people who thought with detachment when in the midst of strong emotion, conscious at one and the same moment of a cool head and a hot heart. In *Armistice Day*, in this last volume, we cannot but be convinced that we are listening to the thoughts that came to the poet in the very midst of the brief Silence:

Birds stayed not in their singing,  
The heart is beating,  
The blood its steady coursing.

The child in the dark womb  
Stirred; dust settled in the tomb.

Old wounds were still smarting,  
Echoes were hollow-sounding,  
New desires still upspringing.

No silent Armistice might stay  
Life and Death wrangling in the old way.

Earth's pulse still was beating,  
The bright stars circling;  
Only our tongues were hushing,

While Time ticked silent on, men drew  
A deeper breath than passion knew.

There is the same fusion of thought and feeling in *Outpost Duty*. That poem was inspired by a casual



sentence in Mr. Blunden's *Undertones of War*: it is significant that any casual sentence seen anywhere, so that it had some implication linking it to the general riddle of existence, or the general endeavour to make terms with life, or the general human welter of carnal and spiritual aspiration and experience, might prompt Freeman to utterance. One of his most ambitious long poems was inspired by a curt paragraph in a newspaper about two forgotten children having died of starvation in a flat in Westminster. In this very volume are to be found lines drawn from him by the lynching of negroes in Mississippi. This poet, supposedly so predominantly pastoral, was in fact far more varied in mood and far wider in range than most of his contemporaries. The zealous for comparisons may find a kinship with Donne in *Hemispheres*, and an affinity with Hardy in the macabre *The New House. Letter and Answer*, in these last pages, is the beginning of a poem Browningsque in its conception; and the long and evidently unfinished *There Came a Time*, tremendously ambitious in its attempt to envisage the changes which would be wrought in human society and the human outlook by the abrogation of the main condition of life, testifies to a philosophic intelligence which habitually roved over the whole of that great crucible of history, and never wearied of dissecting our nature into its elements and pondering the circumstances which determine their balance.

Freeman's interest in life was scientific, as well as passionate, æsthetic, and religious: he was a whole man.

It can hardly be disputed that as a critic Freeman, though not very productive, was one of the soundest of his generation. Not being a professional man of letters, he had the advantage of always choosing subjects about which he really wanted to say something—which something very often took the form of generous and understanding praise of contemporaries. An indication of the quality of his criticism as well as that of his prose may be conveyed by a passage from *English Portraits and Essays* (1924):

It is easier to speak candidly of the dead than of the living; it is easier to praise the dead, it is easier to be just to the dead than to the living. The art of criticism, which may appear to some a purely intellectual exercise, is primarily a moral exercise, for it is not to be practised except with equal honesty and sensitiveness, equal kindness and confidence; but the natural difficulty of applying critical principles to a dead artist is slight in comparison with that which arises when the subject is a contemporary. Those principles themselves are so variable and variously cherished, and the æstheticism which every artist and every critic broods darkly upon is so purely personal, that the task of finding a common ground and using a common language is perplexing as well as exciting.

Criticism is not a science, else young men might learn it; nor an attitude, else old men might grow perfect in it; rather is it an adventure calling for a touch of gallantry, a touch of forbearance, a gentle use of logic, a free recourse to imagination, and no more than the faintest hint of dogmatism. If something of this delicate adjustment may be spared when the subject is in the past, certainly nothing must be forgotten in following a living creative mind in its mental travails. The subject is no longer an island to be painfully surveyed, but a ship to be followed, a light to be pursued through the changing currents of the mind.

This is the opening of an essay on Walter de la Mare: the others include discriminating eulogies of Cobbett and G. K. Chesterton, Maurice Hewlett, Edmund Gosse, and Coventry Patmore, and the tone of them is precisely what that passage might lead one to expect. Freeman did not (as it is the duty of a reviewer of new books to do) star-sprinkle his essays with quotations selected because of their mere merit, and give an easy delight to the reader of the criticism: he was exploring, defining, expounding, and chose such extracts as best illustrated his arguments. Nor did he rely at all on incidental felicities of his own, or the tricks of the improviser—those brilliant half-truths, epigrams, superficial parallels and contrasts, verbally striking restatements of the accepted obvious, or those paste similes and metaphors which share the colour and glitter, but not the substance, of harder

and rarer gems. He approached men and books seriously, and unself-consciously and uninfluenced by what had been written before; searching for the beauties of inspiration, the subtleties of art, the shades of character, the qualities of thought and doctrine, the peculiarities of perception, of taste, and of language, to which his heart, mind, and ear made him acutely sensitive. He approached his subjects with the measure of his own faculties, and stated the results soberly, subtly, and with only a secondary consideration for effectiveness in his own manner. His writing owed its charms to the clarity and delicacy of his thought, which of its own nature shaped his sentences to a fine concision, or to a grave flow of harmonious long sentences, and which from inner necessity bloomed into an imagery which was always organic in his prose.

The value of the "personal adventure" method in criticism naturally varies with the person employing it. There *have* been men of independent judgment who have fearlessly looked into matters for themselves and discovered that Shakespeare, Milton, and Dickens were no good at all. Freeman's character and mind were such that his enjoyments were at once catholic and canonical. The independence of his own examination never led him to exalt men whom the community of criticism has agreed to be unimportant, or to attempt to pull the recognized great from their

thrones. It merely led him to the discovery of unfamiliar aspects, the dusting of neglected corners, the qualifications in detail of mechanically repeated judgments, the revelation of shades of motive and predilection, of beauties and flaws in expression, which had been awaiting the scrutiny of his honest and careful eye. Of his peculiar kinships as a poet he was aware: but he could be sound, sympathetic, and illuminating on writers who were as different from him as is possible within the wide limits of genuineness and intelligence. He never carolled like the robin, but he loved the robin's song; he never wrote in the rapid rhythms of high excitement, but his heart-beat in response to the shouts and gallopings of others: and the guffaws of the great buffoons drew from him, as he stood detached, a smile that spoke of a finer relish than many men's hilarity. Where his appreciation was slightly defective was where he found himself unable to tolerate the neighbourhood of baseness, vulgarity, shallowness, or even clever histrionics: he could not quite easily enjoy, for what they were worth, the adroitness and surface charm of brilliant charlatans and elegant poseurs, and he had his doubts about red-nosed comedians. Those reservations may help to define his bent. As for his way of expressing himself it was firm, yet unaggressive, confident, yet modest, persuasive without cajolery, passages of hard reasoning being mingled with roving of a musing

poet's fancy: his humour was not paraded, and he was able to express contempt in a quiet word or phrase and turn to pleasanter things.

In his books the essence of the man will be found, and by the percipient and painstaking, a good deal of autobiography. But the picture of him as he walked and talked will be incomplete until and unless his letters are collected. These were extremely numerous: many were long, and the best he had to give, whether of mind or of heart, was poured into them: he was not of those niggards who keep all their best things for the printed page, and even the shortest of his notes, which were a happy blend of spontaneity and care, had the artist's touch. Small gleams of humour and elegance would be slipped into postscripts after the merest one-line acknowledgment of a proof or invitation to dinner. I have been perusing scores of these, and may pardonably quote a few illustrations. During the General Strike he writes briefly, looking on the bright side: there was no room in the shrunken sheets for *Attempts to Explain the Fiscal Problems of Patagonia* or *The Declining Birthrate in Salt Lake City*. He adds that there would be something to be said for a permanent but discriminating strike of the printers, proceeding to give his list of the proscribed. "We eat at seven, in our native Woad, undecked" is a characteristic PS. to one kind of note; and to another: "I'm still bewildered at being asked to make an

article longer: broader, lighter, looser, obscener, I can understand. But longer!" Again and again he writes soliciting aid for some deserving writer or draughtsman, his own efforts being referred to in such terms as: "I'm busybodying a bit for G., so as to help his thing a little more effectively than by the verses I've given him for it," or "I'm doing . . . a stupid article with stupid emphasis, 'I like this, and that, and the other—look!' And that's the best thing a critic (no critic, I) can say, after all: anything else he'll only say for the egotism of ideas, hatred, envy. Envy perhaps has crept into my notes, but may not be detected." Often, in letters, he lapsed into sustained passages of criticism. Here are one or two out of many:

(1917. In the course of a discussion about a poem, by another man, rather loose in structure.) I was glad to read . . . twice aloud, and so reading it didn't miss so acutely the *form* which I did miss on reading it to myself. There seems nearly always something of evasion or indolence in irregular verse, unless the passion behind the poem is felt in it, making its own strong, native rhythm: and only very seldom is anything won which would compensate for the loss of form. I don't know if one can argue from the fact that the lines which are most delightful are usually those most definitely "lines"; for it can be retorted that they seem delightful only because they

are definite. But I do think that emotion seeks for and hungers after and wholly needs form, and needs it not only for resistance, as a swimmer needs water, but for its very means of life. So far as the free versers are dispensing with form, they are fundamentally, metaphysically, and even demonstrably wrong—and nothing could be wronger. I suppose in the abstract the ideal would be for every poem a new and different form, the expression of every lyric utterly completing and enfolding—simply *embodying*—the individual impulse; but since the mind hardens and grows firm, and character comes more and more surely into the work—half blessedly and half not—the form tends to repetition, embodying over and over again the same passion in nearly the same shape. And this, not always because inspiration has failed but because it hasn't, the passion becoming a ruling passion, the idea pure, Idea, seeking satisfaction in repetition merely because it is incapable of satisfaction.

Was this all nonsense? I haven't the ghost of an "idea" about poetry, and no "theory" of verse. "One's mind's made so"—and the difference between maturity and immaturity, between man and man, is only that some know at last, more than half unconsciously, how their mind's made, and let it move where it will. Which is the elementary forgotten wisdom of the world.



(1926. Describing one of his rare visits to the theatre.)

It's very seldom I go to the theatre—ordinarily I hate it, my puritanic blood made critical by an expiring spurt of conscience—and so I'm inclined to be cold in my mind yet soft in my heart: impressed by the very things that seem ignominious, easily swayed, and angry at being swayed. The last play I saw was Pirandello's *Henry IV.*, which overwhelmed me, and when I saw this I couldn't help recalling Pirandello, for something of the same painful urgency streamed over the stage and struck me sharply. It seemed mainly a painful play, even cruel; not simply in its acute emotional scenes, but in its general sense of men at war with time, snared by circumstances. It's common to be snared and teased by the senses, gross or fine; it's not so common to be aware of the pressure of time like an iceberg, annulling all emotion and affection. What in fact it brought home was the coarse intolerable fact of death, alias time, alias fate—or what not. It was the *isolation* of man in time and space, the fact that his simplest and sincerest voice can't carry (except in the miraculous tones of poetry) across centuries or even decades of years.

And sometimes he would glide surprisingly from passionate earnestness to genial flippancy. One letter, mostly about that "psychological" poetry which so greatly exercised his thoughts, ends: "It's the kind of poetry that remains to be written. All that living pool of dark deep water remains unnoticed, and it's

the essential poetry which isn't of our time, or past time, but of all time, and no time. . . . We've intestinal poisoning in the family. What have you?"

He once quoted Patmore's proud valediction:

I have written little, but it is all my best; I have never spoken when I had nothing to say, nor spared time or labour to make my words true. I have respected posterity; and, should there be a posterity which cares for letters, I dare to hope that it will respect me.

The last portion of this, Freeman himself could never have written. The first may stand for himself. As for his "stature" as a poet it is not a matter that any man who knew him could trouble to think of when trying to accustom himself to the departure of such utter integrity, such gentleness and kindness, such modesty, such reverence, and such steadfastness.

O, why in all a world of sweet,  
Bird-song and dew and light and heat,  
Comes this malignity of Death to still  
Blood and spirit with sudden chill,  
Breathing in youth's ears, like poison,  
His whisper hoarse.

Here, for the last time, we find him putting the perpetual question, which again stalks through our own hearts because of his loss. But he did not habitually linger on that note: he won, through hard and courageous struggle, consolations and assuagements, and an acceptance of life under all the hanging

swords which are as foreign to the complacent optimists as they are to the sick prophets of despair, the fruit of a strength and sweetness which will fortify men yet unborn.

## JULIUS WEST

**J**ULIUS WEST was born in St. Petersburg on March 21st (9th O.S.), 1891. In May, when he was two months old, he went to London, where from that time onwards, his father, Mr. Semon Rappoport, was correspondent for various Russian papers. At twelve years of age, West entered the Haberdashers' (Aske's) School at Hampstead. He left school in 1906, and became a temporary clerk in the Board of Trade, assisting in the preparation of the report on the cost of living in Germany, issued in 1908. On leaving the Board of Trade, he became a junior clerk in the office of the Fabian Society, then in a basement in Clement's Inn. (It was there that in 1908 or 1909 I first saw him.) To get to the Secretary's room one had to pass through the half-daylight of a general office stacked with papers and pamphlets, and on some occasion I received the impression of a new figure beyond the counter, that of a tall, white-faced, stooping youth with spectacles and wavy dark hair, studious-looking, rather birdlike. The impression is still so vivid that I know now I was in a manner aware that he was unusual long before I was conscious of any curiosity about him. I had known him thus casually by sight

for some time, without knowing his name: I had known his name and his repute as a precocious boy for some time without linking the name to the person. He was said to read everything and to know a lot of economics; a great many people were getting interested in him; he was called West and was a Russian, a collocation which puzzled me until I learned that he was a Jew from Russia who had adopted an English name. Although still under twenty, he was already, I think, lecturing to small Labour groups when I got to know him more intimately. He knew his orthodox economics inside out, and was in process of acquiring a peculiar knowledge of the involved history of the Socialist movement and its congeners during the last hundred years.

He was, in fact, already rather extraordinary. His education had been broken off early, and he always regretted it; but I have known few men who have suffered less from the absence of an academic training. Given his origins, his early struggle, his intellectual and political environment, the ease with which he secured some sort of hearing for his first small speeches to congenial audiences, one might have expected a very different product. It would not have been surprising, had he, with all his intellect become a narrow fanatic with a revolutionary shibboleth; it would not have been strange if, avoiding this because of his common sense, he had been drawn

into the statistical machine and given himself entirely to collecting and digesting the materials for social reform. He took a delight in economic theory and he had a passion for industrial history: the road was straight before him. But the pleasure and the passion were not exclusive. Although it is possible that his greatest natural talents were economic and historical, and (as I think) likely that had he lived his chief work would have been along lines of which the *History of Chartism* is indicative, he was in no hurry to specialize. He had a catholic mind. Behind man he could see the universe, and, unlike many Radicals of his generation, behind the problems and the attempted or suggested solutions of his time, he could see the wide and long historical background, the whole experience of man with the lessons, moral, psychological and political, which are to be drawn from it, and are not to be ignored. You may find in his early writings (though not in his *History of Chartism*) all sorts of crudities, flippancies and loose assertions; he was young and impulsive, he had been under the successive influences of Mr. Shaw and Mr. Chesterton, and lacked their years and their command of language; he had a full mind and a fluent pen which, when it got warm, sometimes ran away. But at bottom he was unusually sane; and his sanity came in part from the intellectual temper that I have sketched, but partly from a sweet, sensitive

and sympathetic nature which made injustice as intolerable to him as it was unreasonable. He did not always (being young and having had until the last year or two little experience of the general world of men) realize how people would take his words; but I never knew a man who more quickly or more girlishly blushed when he thought he had said or written something wounding or not quite sensible.

Julius West's life was conspicuously a life of the mind. But if the reader understands by an intellectual a man to whom books and verbal disputations are alone sufficient, reservations must be made. It is true that he was a glutton for books: he collected a considerable library where Horace Walpole, Marx, Stevenson, Conrad, Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Webb and Marlowe stood together. His father writes: "He was a great reader, and his literary taste even as a schoolboy was remarkable. He scorned to read books written specially for children, but used to enjoy the reading of classical writers even at the age of seven or eight years, and his knowledge of all Shakespeare's dramas was astonishingly complete." But he was restless and roving rather than sedentary. He was capable of running great physical risks and enduring hardships beyond his strength; he travelled as much as he could, and had the authorities admitted him into the Army, he would, unless his body had given out, have made a good soldier. He did not

mistake books for life; but one had the feeling that life to him was primarily a great book. His nature was emotional enough: he fell in love; he was deeply attached to a few intimate friends; and there was an emotional element in his politics and his reactions to all the strange spectacles he saw in his last years of life. But ordinarily what one thought of was his curiosity rather than his emotions; his senses not at all. If at one moment one had peeped into his affectionate nature the next one was always carried off into some "objective" discussion. His curiosity about things, his love of debate, gave him a refuge during trouble and an habitual resort in ordinary times. He seemed incapable of any idle thing. Most of us, with varying frequency, will make physical exertions without obtaining or desiring reward beyond the effort and the fatigue; or we will lie lapped in the gratification of our senses, happy, without added occupation, to drink wine or sit in silence with a friend and tobacco, or encumber a beach and feel the hot sun on our faces or loll in a green shade without even a green thought. Or we will travel and see men and countries, or take part in events for the mere exhilaration of doing it. But whatever his physical activity, Julius West would always have been the curious spectator, observing and learning, recording and deducing, with history in the making round him; and, whatever his physical inactivity, his brain would never have



been asleep, or his senses dormant. If one walked with him, there were few silences; a punt on the river with him would have meant (unless he were reading) eager, peering eyes and speculations either about the surrounding objects, and what people had said about them, or else about Burke, Bakunin or some such thing. For all his energy, I never knew his ambition, or was clearly convinced that he had any other ambition than to see and learn all he could, and produce his results.

He attempted all sorts of literary work; parodies, short stories, criticism. It was to be expected that the criticism would be chiefly concerned with doctrine, and that the other work would be defective and full of ideas. Partly, I suppose, all this writing was the by-product of an intellectual organ which could not stop working but demanded a change of work; partly his very curiosity operated; he saw what other men had written, and he wanted to find out what it would be like to write this, that and the other thing. But he had neither the sensuousness nor the selfishness (if that hard word may be used of that detachment and that preoccupation) of the artist, nor the reverence for form that demands and justifies an intense application to general detail which is not, to the hasty eye, very significant. As a rule he was exclusively preoccupied with the general purport of what he wanted to say. But it was not unnatural that a

young man with his heart, his imaginative intelligence and his wide reading, should have begun his career as an author with a book of poems. (The book published by Mr. David Nutt in 1913 was called *Atlantis and other Poems*.) It was ignored by the reviewers and the public; he would not have denied that it deserved to be; but it was very interesting to any one interested in him. A great part of it (remember, most of the verses had been written by a boy under twenty-one) was very weak; short poems about mermaids, sunken galleons, maidens, dreams, ghosts and witches, written in rhythms which are lame, but displaying in the ineffective variety of their form the restless ingenuity, the hunger for experiment of this young author; and here and there lit up by a precocious thought or phrase. A man with a greater share of the poetic craft was likely to do better with a larger subject and a looser structure, and much the best poem in West's book is *Atlantis*, a narrative in about five hundred lines of blank verse, with a few songs embedded in it. The blank verse is as good as most; few men of West's age could write better; and he could without contortion move in it, and make it say whatever he wanted it to say. He represents the Lost Continent as dwindled to a small island and inhabited by people conscious of their impending doom, weighed down with the memory of what their country's forests and fields and birds were like before

the last wave. The subject offered an obvious chance as a visible spectacle, and the poet (feeling this) made an attempt to paint the features of the city, describing its houses and temples and festivals. The attempt was unsuccessful; it was when he reached more congenial ground that West showed his originality and his power. With one of the most alluringly "picturesque" and melodramatic subjects in the world under consideration, he put all the obvious things behind him and spent his time considering what effects such a situation as that of the doomed remnant of Atlanteans would have had upon the minds of men. Passionate love became almost extinct:

and 'twas thought 'twas well  
 No helpless childish hands were there to pull  
 Their elders' heartstrings, making death seem  
                   hard  
 And parting very bitter, and the end  
 A bitter draft of pain, poured by a hand  
 Unpitying, a draft of which the old  
 Were doomed to drink more than a double share.

The poets

Did all but cease th' eternal themes to sing  
 And in their place sang songs about the End.

The philosophers ran to strange doctrines about the perfectibility of the survivors from the next deluge or starkly expounded the End, or were

Buffoons who sought to turn the End a thing  
 For jest;

and across the city sometimes flashed a band of fanatics proclaiming this shadowed life to be an illusion from which those who had courage and faith could escape. Voices spoke, sad or resentful, of men cheated out of their due years; one fierce

For us an aimless life, an aimless Death. . . .  
 That I should have the power for once to *live*,  
 To be a creature strong with power to kill,  
 To stay, but for a little while, the strength  
 That hems us in? That I might taste the joy  
 Of conflict with an equal force to mine,  
 Conflict of life and death, not purposeless,  
 Not vain, as we now feebly struggle on. . . .  
 That I could have the gift of knowing hate,  
 Black hate that animates before it kills. . . .  
 O, to do aught with force, not rest supine.

In this boyish poem we can see West's mind trying to realize *Atlantis* as a whole community, where characters vary and doctrines clash; as a vessel holding, at a certain position in time and space, the human spirit.

Whether he would have written more poetry I do not know. I doubt it; at all events he had little time and many distractions, and he looked like growing confirmed in other pursuits. In 1913 he went into the office of the *New Statesman*, for which, intermittently, he wrote reviews (usually of books about Eastern Europe) and miscellaneous articles until he died. He remained in the office for a few months; then left, and became a free lance writing for various

papers, lecturing, and starting work on the present book and others. I think his second publication was a tract, notable for its sagacity and its wit, on John Stuart Mill. He was busy with several books when the war broke out, which in the end was to kill him at twenty-seven.

I forget if it was in August, 1914, that he first tried to join the Army. A layman might have supposed that both his eyes and his lungs were too weak, but a doctor told him that he was good for active service. Whenever it was that he volunteered—his first attempt was early, and there were others after his short visit to Russia and Warsaw in 1914-15—he made a discovery. He had not realized—if he had ever known it the conception had dropped out of his mental foreground—that he was not a British subject. But they told him so, and said that his status must be settled before he could have a commission. He had arguments: his parents were Russian subjects and he himself was born in Russia; but his parents were merely visiting Russia when he was born, and he submitted that at that time he was really domiciled in England. The argument, it seemed, had no legal validity; and, denied citizenship in the only home he knew or wanted, he at once went, very set and intent, to a friendly solicitor's office in Lincoln's Inn Fields where I had the odd experience of assisting, as I believed, to naturalize a man I had never thought

of as a foreigner. This, he thought, would settle it; he would soon be in the Army. But no. The hierarchy at this point thought of something new. He was a Russian, an Ally of military age; we would not naturalize him here. It would have been difficult to conceive a more grotesque suggestion, if one knew the man. He had left Russia when a baby in long clothes; he spoke Russian (at that time) with difficulty; he looked at Russia and her institutions from an English point of view; he was married (he had been confirmed in the Church of England), to the daughter of an English clergyman; all his friends were English and most of them in uniform: and it was suggested that if he really desired to serve the Allied cause he should divest himself of all his ties and go off to mess in the snows of Courland or Galicia with bearded strangers from the Urals and the Ukraine. The suggestion was repulsive to him, quite apart from the fact that it might mean years of unbroken exile. He was, however, allowed to join an ambulance corps in London.

Before long he was off to Petrograd on a flying tour as a correspondent; thence to Moscow and Warsaw, within sound of which the German guns were booming: Russian Warsaw with enemy aeroplanes overhead and expensive Tsarist officers revelling in the best hotels. He saw the Grand Duke Nicholas on November 17, 1914, in the greatest Cathedral of

Petrograd at a gorgeous service of commemoration of the miraculous preservation of the Tsar Alexander II: how long was that ago! He returned, and for a year and more was in England, editing *Everyman* and writing books at a great pace. Then his wife died. Another opportunity of going to Russia offered, and a man always restless took it as a means of escape from himself. He was in Petrograd in the early months of the Bolshevik regime. He lived (a few letters came through) in a state of high excitement, seeing everything he could, visiting the Institute and the Bolshevik law courts, attending meetings at which Lenin and Trotsky spoke, dogged everywhere, for he was suspected, daily expecting to be shot from behind. Being a democrat and a believer in ordered progress he was very angry with the Bolsheviks; having a zest for queer manifestations of life he found an immense variety of interest and amusement in their conduct. When he returned he was full of stories of rascality. Lenin, on the point of character, was in many ways an exception; but he was tricked wholesale by German Jew agents disguised as Bolsheviks. One of them, high in the Bolshevik Foreign Office, had even judiciously edited the Secret Treaties, the publication of which so edified the Bolshevik public and so surprised the world. Daily great stacks of documents were served out to the Bolshevik press, a dole for this paper, a dole for that; but the busy German spy had

taken the last precaution to ensure that the documents which involved the Allies should come out, and that those which most seriously compromised Germany should not. West became pretty familiar with many of the revolutionary figures, and enjoyed working in such an extraordinary scene. But he recognized that his excitement was hectic and bad for him; he suffered to some extent from the famine conditions of Petrograd; the cold was terrible, and that, and the indoor stuffiness which it led to, affected his chest. He had to get away. In February, 1918, he left with a party of English governesses and elderly invalids. He was not an old man nor a governess; he was in effect an English journalist of fighting age who might be carrying valuable information; but he was fortified with some lie or other, and with the rest of the pathetic caravan he went over the ice and through the German lines. The enemy were at that time in occupation of the Aland Islands, and West told a romantic story of the night he and his companions spent in a village there guarded by the German soldiers: a night filled with snow, a silence broken by guttural voices talking of home and the fortunes of the war in Flanders.

He got through to Stockholm and from there home, where, unexpected and unannounced, he floated in on me, keen and volatile as ever, but looking ill. He ought then to have taken a long rest; but he was asked to go off to Switzerland—then a hotbed of enemy and



pacifist intrigue—and he thought that with his experience and knowledge of languages (he now knew Russian, French, German, Dutch and Roumanian) it was his duty to go. But it killed him. He came back, hollow-eyed and coughing, and went first to an hotel in Surrey, and then to a sanatorium in the Mendips. His friends did not know how ill he was; he wrote cheerfully about books and politics, asked for more books, was glad he had found an invalid officer or two with cultivated tastes. But he just saw the war out. A complication of influenza and pneumonia developed, and he died.

During the war he had published several books. Two—*Soldiers of the Tsar* and *The Fountain*—were issued by the Iris Publishing Company, the proprietor of which, now dead, deserves a book to himself. The first was a collection of sketches written mostly in Russia in 1914; the second a tumultuous race of satires and parodies probably modelled on *Caliban's Guide to Letters*. The aged Reginald at the end observes:

And, oh, my children, be not afraid of your own imaginations. Once in the distant ages before our universe was born, when Time was an unmarked desert, and God was lonely, He let the fountain of His fancies play, and life began. Be you, too, creators, for there is none, even among my own grandchildren, who has not in him a vestige of that impulse which made the earth.

The book was written on this principle; perhaps the fountain played too fast; but its many-coloured spray shows how various was the manipulator's knowledge and how active his mind. The other books were *G. K. Chesterton: a Critical Study* (Secker), an abridged translation of the de Goncourt *Journal*, published by Nelson, and translations of three plays by Tchekoff and one by Andrieff. The translation from the Goncourts, produced at a great place, is really good: lively, vivid, idiomatic. The monograph, though independent and containing plenty of reservations, was an exposition of the theory that Mr. Chesterton "is a great and courageous thinker." West, though not blind to his subject's genius as artist and humorist, characteristically concentrated on his opinions about religion and politics; his own were revealed *en passant*. "The dialogues on religion contained in *The Ball and the Cross* are alone enough and more than enough to place it among the few books on religion which could safely be placed in the hands of an atheist or an agnostic with an intelligence." *Magic and Orthodoxy* together "are a great work, striking at the roots of disbelief." During the war "those of us who had not the fortune to escape the Press by service abroad, especially those of us who derived our living from it, came to loathe its misrepresentation of the English people. . . . Then we came to realize, as never before, the value of such men

as Chesterton." It was an impulsive book, but there was a great deal of very acute analysis in it. The one book, however, which has a reasonable chance of long survival is his *History of Chartism*.

Now it really is rather remarkable that this book should have come from the same man, the same very young man, as the works mentioned above. We still produce, and it is a good thing we do, men who take an interest in everything and talk, whether shallowly or with the instinct of genius, or both, about literature, science and politics, relating them all. But if a man does this, one can never expect him to be also a specialist (except, rarely, in some literary subject) who is capable of research and loves documents. An essay on Chartism we might expect; an exposition of its real or supposed principles; an idealization of the movement. But we do not expect a man with the habits of the literary-political journalist to grub for years amongst pamphlets and manuscripts in the British Museum, and produce a chapter of history containing and relating a "mass of new facts." But that is what West did, and he did it concurrently with his other miscellaneous work; editing, reviewing, translating, speaking, and the rapid composition of topical books. The Chartists were specially interesting as being in some sort pioneers of the modern Labour movement in which West had grown up; but he might have been drawn to any other subject had he found

another that had been so neglected by English historians. It did not take him long to discover that some current opinions would have to be revised; that the physical menace of the Chartist movement had often been exaggerated, and its historical importance generally ignored. But, whatever might have been his conclusions, he loved finding things out; almost anything would do. He had a prodigious memory that would enable him to correct at a moment's notice a mis-statement as to the percentage of one-roomed tenements in Huddersfield, or the name of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in Mr. Gladstone's first Government. He could read anything with interest and he forgot nothing that he read. At the British Museum he went through all the available Chartist literature like a caterpillar. Then one day, with great excitement and amusement, he came to tell me that he had discovered, at the Hendon annexe, scores of manuscript volumes put together by Francis Place which had never been examined by any previous English writer. Every sort of Chartist trifle had been "pasted up" by the industrious tailor; the obscurer the newspaper from which Place's cuttings came, the greater West's pleasure. He liked them for their own sakes; but he retained his sense of proportion, and I do not think that those more competent to judge than I, who read his book, will think that West swamped his general

outline with his own lesser discoveries. And he had none of the jealous greed of the baser kind of research worker. He would have given his results to any one. When he was nearly through his book, there was announced a book on somewhat similar lines by another young student, the late Mr. Hovell. West showed no fear that his own work might be rendered worthless, but (I think) volunteered to assist in preparing it for the press.

# A MISCELLANY OF BOOKS

## PATER AND MARIUS

WALTER PATER was born in 1839 and died in 1894. He was educated at the King's School, Canterbury, and Brasenose College, Oxford, where he spent most of his life as a don. He was a quiet, precise, conventionally-dressed man with a moustache, not prone to violent controversy, the idol of a small sect of undergraduates, immensely respected by a few friends. This is not a biography or a general criticism: those who wish for an account and an examination of him may be referred to the late Arthur Christopher Benson's admirable monograph in the English Men of Letters Series. He wrote a number of books, mostly collections of "studies": *Marius the Epicurean*, written between 1881 and 1884, is much the most substantial and important of them.

In the casual allusions of current criticism Pater is often the victim of injustice. He is commonly referred to as the father of the "Art for Art's Sake" movement of the 'eighties and 'nineties, and the one passage quoted from him is a rather overcharged description of a picture which seemed to him to mirror the iridescence of decay. The common con-

ception of him is that of an a-moral scholar who announced that art existed in order to intensify the moment for the moment's sake and who, faced with the conflicts, agonies, and exaltations of the world of men, dandiacally replied, like Théophile Gautier, "moi je fais émaux et camées." The discovery of a really "inevitable" epithet gave him, it is supposed, a satisfaction which he could never have derived from any other achievement: he was a connoisseur writing for connoisseurs.

There is an element of truth in this: he had a fastidiously delicate side, he was impatient of the slipshod, eclectic in his admirations: his themes were commonly found in fields unfrequented by the many: he favoured characters disdainful of the herd and a prose scrupulous in dignity, richly and a little heavily clad, far removed from all the hasty jargons of every day: he was an æsthetic anchorite paying solitary and ceremonious devotions to the principle of Beauty. Yet to say all that is not to state the whole truth, and it is particularly to ignore *Marius the Epicurean*, the solid and long-meditated apologia of his prime. "Art for Art's Sake" was never supposed by Pater to be a sufficient aim and satisfaction: the intensification of enjoyment which Art gave him was important to him but a less abiding preoccupation than other things. If Oscar Wilde was his æsthetic disciple, Ruskin was his father in æsthetics: he



occupied a middle position, not indeed mixing his art and his ethics, but simultaneously concerned with both. Perhaps the most crucial fact of all to remember about him is that in youth he intended to become a clergyman, and that just before his death he is believed to have been again thinking of taking holy orders. "The Rev. Walter Pater" may sound strangely indeed to those who conceive of him as a sort of Oxford Omar or as the rather bewildered, hollow-eyed, and strenuously appreciative husband of La Gioconda. Yet, had he lived a few years longer, he might have compelled us to accustom our ears to it; and it would not have consorted ill with the gravity, the spiritual earnestness, the charity, the sensitive-ness, the complete honesty and the Christian exordium of *Marius the Epicurean*. How people can continue to deduce this shibboleth of "Art for Art's Sake" from a book like this is a puzzle. A mere connoisseur in cosmogonies and ethical systems, whose passion for form and record could best be satisfied by depicting them, is, I suppose, a conceivable creature. Let no one think that the author of *Marius* was such a one. No doctrine is examined in this book which has not a perennial appeal to some minds in some moods; the weighing of the successive attitudes is not the weighing of an appraising jeweller with his little scales, but that of an anxious seeker for truth peering into the depths of every well that he passes. He may not come to

definite conclusions about religion and duty, but he is far from being indifferent to them; a brooding sad-eyed man who turned often enough from his murex and his roses, his Latin phrases and his miniatures on vellum, his ambrosial goddesses and amaranthine youths, to sorrow over the vast barbarity of history, to gaze in silent inquiry at the starry midnight sky, to listen to the response of his own heart to heroism, to candid innocence and to self-abnegating love. Walter Pater's was a profoundly religious nature. His æstheticism was governed by ideals of temperance and good taste, and it was conditioned and limited by his humanity and spiritual awareness. He was never within a thousand miles of that hell of the really pure æsthete who ends by admiring the beautifully curved and tinted facial contortions of a victim who is being flayed alive. Marius ends with somebody else saying "Abi, anima Christiana," not with himself saying "Qualis artifex pereo." The book is as truly a religious novel, for all its disquisitions on other themes, as any of its didactic or doubt-haunted contemporaries.

The book is in narrative form, and it has retained its hold over several successive generations: but few writers of fiction can ever have been so notably devoid as was Pater of some of the principal talents and characteristics of the typical novelist. His powers are, in some regards, deficient; his methods are, in some regards, amateurish. He is at every point technically

unorthodox, and he succeeds in overcoming by his earnestness and his golden speech difficulties raised by his own indifference to the most commonplace canons of the narrative art, and his own incompetence to do things generally deemed indispensable to successful tales of whatever species.

In the first place the central character, who fills most of the stage most of the time, is not conceived "in the round," hardly even in the flat. Marius at best (subject to a reservation made later) is an enchanting shadow to whom are attributed all the most agreeable moral qualities and all the most likely moral speculations. At moments he comes alive, at moments of intense affection or sacrifice: in a general way we are merely told that he is alive. Normally, a novelist will endeavour to exhibit a character by showing him expressing himself in action and speech. Pater does neither. Marius's wanderings are not very strongly "motivated"; he drifts from place to place stirred by a faint curiosity, and most of his experiences come to him by chance. He never attempts to exercise his will upon life, neither grief nor love ever makes him do anything but think, and in the end he assents with a faint sweet smile to a martyrdom not of his own seeking. We are not shown his physical movements except in so far as they assist to provoke trains of interesting thought in him or in his creator. He may at times believe in a doctrine of enjoyment, but he is

seldom seen enjoying specific things under the promptings of his passions, his desires, or his doctrines. Nor do we know the accents of his voice any better than we know the personal hue of his actions. There can seldom have been a novel in which there was so little dialogue: what dialogue there is which leaves any impression behind it is philosophic conversation, not true dialogue. Not in words are the loves of Marius and his friends expressed or his griefs and longings at moments of peculiar poignancy. Virtually every opportunity for dramatic speech is neglected: we are told by the author what Marius is thinking, never by Marius himself: Marius is a transmitter.

As for the other characters, it is significant that those for whose existence and characteristics there is historical warrant are more vividly and distinctly drawn than those whom Pater felt obliged to invent. Cornelius-Galahad and Flavian-Catullus (the *Pervigilium* must have had an author, and it was a pleasant notion to produce one) are types, catalogues of qualities, not individuals. There is considerably more individualization about the portraits of the others: the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, Lucian (an Anatole France in his softer moments), the laughing and conceited Faun-Platonist, Apuleius, and even old Fronto, the Emperor's tutor. Flavian is more elaborately described than anyone in the book: the numbering of qualities is very exhaustive: the type clearly recogniz-

able: yet one hot impatient word, one betrayal of sudden shame or love in speech, would have made him live more clearly than a page of the facts that we are given.

The construction, too, of the book is very strange. There is no well-proportioned development towards a crisis in the action—which, with this theme and method, is the same as the crisis in the thought. When the end comes, it comes accidentally and unexpectedly: we are even defeated of our natural hopes of seeing Marius come more closely to grips with Christianity; it is certainly some *deus, aut diabolus, ex machina* who precipitates this premature breach in the train of thought. Important characters are introduced and then dropped for no reason, sometimes having had very little effect upon the plot, such as it is; when they have gone Marius usually forgets them and so does Pater. Frequently the action is interrupted by long digressions: the author even intervenes in his own person, gently brushing aside his characters and their “scenery,” whilst he imparts interesting information about an imperial triumph or a philosophic tenet. Pater, in fact, would obviously not have made a good playwright.

Yet it is of little avail to judge a book on *a priori* technical grounds if the book evidently succeeds in arousing, and over a long period, the enthusiastic interest of the audience for whom it is intended. If

*Marius* be not a good story, then it is a good something else. There are, it is clear at once, some elements in it which violate all the canons of narrative and are largely responsible for the book's fascination. Pater may interrupt his story as much as he likes: we never complain, the interruption being so good: we are even content to forget *Marius* for many pages while we are reading the lovely fable of Cupid and Psyche, bodily transferred from the *Golden Ass* of Apuleius. This is preceded by a critical essay on Apuleius's strange mixture of beauty, humour, fantasy, coarseness and morbidity. Pater does remember to mention *Marius* once in the course of this, and to attribute one of his own impressions to the young man: but the illusion of *Marius*'s existence and attention is hardly sustained by a sentence like "all through the book, there is an unmistakably real feeling for asses, with bold touches like Swift's," or the statement that a certain scene "is worthy of Théophile Gautier." The book is considerably enriched by its references to Lucian and the *Pervigilium* and its sketch of old Fronto: but these are all done for their own sakes and not because they affect *Marius* or the action. We must regard the book as a miscellany with a thread: a religious "revue" with an ancient Roman setting: a mixture of fiction, autobiography, æsthetic criticism, history, ethics, and metaphysics. Every rift is certainly loaded with ore: whatever Pater is doing he

does it well, whether the summarizing of abstract thought, the evocation of pictures, of landscapes and manners, or the delineation of portraits. And in beauty of style the book is the crown of all Pater's achievements.

The writing is not quite as elaborate, bejewelled and be-comma'd as that of some of Pater's other books. No anthologist will find in Marius passages quite as sensuously resonant as the celebrated oration on Monna Lisa, or descriptions quite as exquisitely vivid as that page on the tree's falling petals in *The Child in the House*. We must look elsewhere for Pater at his most glittering, and also for Pater at his most parenthetical and periphrastic. The writing here is more condensed, and has a gravity and clarity which are proper to the comparing of Stoicism and true Epicureanism, a noble gravity and lucidity which permit, reticently and at a low pitch, of every subtle modulation of feeling which Pater could wish to convey, the pity, love, grief, mirth, excitement, indignation, and anger of a scholar and a gentleman. Who could mistake for anyone else's such a musing and leisurely opening as this—one, by the way, which qualifies the remark made above about the absence of Pater's most parenthetical and sub-claused manner from this book?

Something pensive, spell-bound, and but half-real, something cloistral or monastic, as we should

say, united to this exquisite order, made the whole place seem to Marius, as it were, *sacellum*, the peculiar sanctuary, of his mother, who, still in real widowhood, provided the deceased Marius the elder with that secondary sort of life which we can give to the dead, in our intensely realized memory of them—the “subjective immortality,” to use a modern phrase, for which many a Roman epitaph cries out plaintively to widow or sister or daughter, still in the land of the living. Certainly, if any such considerations regarding them do reach the shadowy people, he enjoyed that secondary existence, that warm place still left, in thought at least, beside the living, the desire for which is actually, in various forms, so great a motive with most of us. And Marius the younger, even thus early, came to think of women’s tears, of women’s hands to lay one to rest, in death as in the sleep of childhood, as a sort of natural want. The soft lines of the white hands and face, set among the many folds of the veil and stole of the Roman widow, busy upon her needlework, or with music sometimes, defined themselves for him as the typical expression of maternity.

Take again the unostentatious music, elegance and exactitude of his description of Verus, that “brother” of Aurelius, who wore a “soft curling beard powdered with gold,” and who “might well have reminded people of the delicate Greek god of flowers and wine”:

The younger, certainly, possessed in full measure that charm of a constitutional freshness of aspect which may defy for a long time extra-



gant or erring habits of life; a physiognomy, healthy-looking, cleanly, and firm, which seemed unassociable with any form of self-torment, and made one think of the muzzle of some young hound or roe, such as human beings invariably like to stroke—a physiognomy, in effect, with all the goodliness of animalism of the finer sort, though still wholly animal. The charm was that of the blond head, the unshrinking gaze, the warm tints: neither more nor less than one may see every English summer, in youth, manly enough, and with the stuff which makes brave soldiers, in spite of the natural kinship it seems to have with playthings and gay flowers. But innate in Lucius Verus there was that more than womanly fondness for fond things, which had made the atmosphere of the old city of Antioch heavy with centuries of voluptuousness, a poison to him: he had come to love his delicacies best out of season, and would have gilded the very flowers.

There is a drawback to this prose. The texture is sometimes so uniform, the cadences so satisfying and so continuously woven, that we are prone to be crooned into a languorous inattention by it, and must needs return on our tracks to notice the rare refinements of idea and observation, the laborious ease of polished phrase. This is evident in the introduction to the Stoic Emperor's speech to the Senate:

There was a certain melancholy grandeur in the very simplicity or triteness of the theme: as it were the very quintessence of all the old Roman

epitaphs, of all that was monumental in that city of tombs, layer upon layer of dead things and people. As if in the very fervour of disillusion, he seemed to be composing—ὥσπερ ἐπιγραφὰς χρόνων καὶ ὅλων ἔθνων—the sepulchral titles of ages and whole peoples; nay! the very epitaph of the living Rome itself. The grandeur of the ruins of Rome,—heroism in ruins: it was under the influence of an imaginative anticipation of this, that he appeared to be speaking. And though the impression of the actual greatness of Rome on that day was but enhanced by the strain of contempt, falling with an accent of pathetic conviction from the emperor himself, and gaining from his pontifical pretensions the authority of a religious intimation, yet the curious interest of the discourse lay in this, that Marius, for one, as he listened, seemed to foresee a grass-grown Forum, the broken ways of the Capitol, and the Palatine hill itself in humble occupation. That impression connected itself with what he had already noted of an actual change even then coming over Italian scenery. Throughout, he could trace something of a humour into which Stoicism at all times tends to fall, the tendency to cry *Abase yourselves!* There was here the almost inhuman impassibility of one who had thought too closely on the paradoxical aspect of the love of posthumous fame. With the ascetic pride which lurks under all Platonism, resultant from its opposition of the seen to the unseen, as falsehood to truth—the imperial Stoic, like his true descendant, the hermit of the middle age, was ready, in no friendly humour, to mock, there in its narrow bed, the corpse which had made so much of itself in life.

One more passage, also with reference to death, may be quoted as carrying his voice, speaking with a less uniform delivery:

That a Numa, and his age of gold, would return, has been the hope or dream of some, in every period. Yet if he did come back, or any equivalent of his presence, he could but weaken, and by no means smite through, that root of evil, certainly of sorrow, of outraged human sense, in things, which one must carefully distinguish from all preventible accidents. Death, and the little perpetual daily dyings, which have something of its sting, he must necessarily leave untouched. And, methinks, that were all the rest of man's life framed entirely to his liking, he would straightway begin to sadden himself, over the fate—say, of the flowers! For there is, there has come to be since Numa lived perhaps, a capacity for sorrow in his heart, which grows with all the growth, alike of the individual and of the race, in intellectual delicacy and power, and which *will* find its aliment.

"It hath a dying fall": that very last word, "aliment," is perfect in weight and movement: try to substitute any of its so-called synonyms for it and Pater's sensitive taste and cunning will be evident. He could unroll masterly convolutions like Henry James; his sustained elegiac passages have something of the mournful surge of seventeenth-century prose; a paragraph like that just quoted is all his own, and reminds us of nobody except his successors. The mere noise

of him read, with only a half-attention to his meaning, is like the sound of fountains in secluded gardens, or of trees faintly rustling on a summer afternoon, or of a fire burning quietly in curtained night, or of bees, or of sleepy birds, or of a melancholy wind.

The book consists chiefly of accounts of spiritual experiences and intellectual speculations, each arising from some contact of Marius's with the daily world or some impact made upon him by the thoughts of others. His trains of thought fall into two obvious categories. There are those which seem to ring very personal to Pater himself, and there are those which, though Pater has set them down here, and may well have often entertained them philosophically, seem more "objective" in their reference and more matter of fact in their statements. Take, for instance, a passage like this (one which the modern psychologists would devour with much alacrity), and who can doubt that Pater is here imputing to Marius very acute sensations of his own produced by a scene literally recorded?

Though his liking for animals was so strong, yet one fierce day in early summer, as he walked along a narrow road, he had seen the snakes breeding, and ever afterwards avoided that place and its ugly associations, for there was something in the incident which made food distasteful and his sleep uneasy for many days afterwards. The memory of it, however, had

almost passed away when, at the corner of a street in Pisa, he came upon an African showman exhibiting a great serpent: once more, as the reptile writhed, the former painful impression revived: it was like a peep into the lower side of the real world, and again for many days took all sweetness from food and sleep. He wondered at himself indeed, trying to puzzle out the secret of that repugnance, having no particular dread of a snake's bite, like one of his companions, who had put his hand into the mouth of an old garden-god and roused there a sluggish viper. A kind of pity even mingled with his aversion, and he could hardly have killed or injured the animals, which seemed already to suffer by the very circumstance of their life, being what they were. It was something like a fear of the supernatural, or perhaps rather a moral feeling, for the face of a great serpent, with no grace of fur or feather so different from quadruped or bird, has a sort of humanity of aspect in its spotted and clouded nakedness. There was a humanity, dusty and sordid and as if far gone in corruption, in the sluggish coil, as it awoke suddenly into one metallic spring of pure enmity against him.

Who can doubt that the individual Walter Pater here speaks through the lips of Marius? "It had always been his policy, through all his pursuit of experience, to take flight in time from any too disturbing passion, from any sort of affection likely to quicken his pulses beyond the point at which the quiet work of life was practicable": there, again, the Pater whom we know is murmuring confidences through a mask; and as

much may be said of some of those early passages in which the young Marius contemplates the past, discovers the present, and dreams of his own future, the very colour of the nineteenth century being in some degree to the second. There were passages, too, of religious speculation which would never have burned so intensely had they not reflected the profound troubles and hazardous voyages of Pater's own soul:

And were the cheerful, sociable, restorative beliefs, of which he had there read so much, that bold adhesion, for instance, to the hypothesis of an eternal friend to man, just hidden behind the veil of a mechanical and material order, but only just behind it, ready perhaps even now to break through—were they, after all, really a matter of choice, dependent on some deliberate act of volition on his part? Were they doctrines one might take for granted, generously take for granted, and led on by them, at first as but well-defined objects of hope, come at last into the region of a corresponding certitude of the intellect? . . . Experience certainly taught that, as regarding the sensible world he could attend or not, almost at will, to this or that colour, this or that train of sounds, in the whole tumultuous concourse of colour and sound, so it was also, for the well-trained intelligence, in regard to that hum of voices which besiege the inward no less than the outward ear. Might it be not otherwise with those various and competing hypotheses, the permissible hypotheses, which, in that open field for hypothesis—one's own actual ignorance of the origin and tendency of our being—present

themselves so importunately, some of them with so emphatic a reiteration, through all the mental changes of successive ages? Might the will itself be an organ of knowledge, of vision?

As we read this little chapter from "the grammar of assent" we feel very much more certain that Pater himself had been tempted to try this peculiar pathway to peace than that it would even have been perceived by his quiet young Roman vagrant. Elsewhere we have admirable expositions of the manner in which Marius examined and discarded one view after another, and plausible accounts of the influence exercised by men and events on the colour of his thought; while occasionally, as in the brilliant and lucid pages on Cyrenaicism and Cynicism, the narrative is discarded, the charming puppet Marius is forgotten, and Pater the scholar and teacher produces an essay which might have come out of a volume of *Studies in Classical Philosophy*. For in spite of all those other qualities which we have noticed, it is in its chaplet of spiritual and intellectual experiences that the chief interest of the book lies. Doubtless there are conjectural cosmogonies which are not discussed or even glanced at here: I think that Marius is never allowed even to suppose a diabolic government of the universe. But most of the changes in the spiritual sky are here recorded: reflective men will find great areas of their experiences compressed within these pages, and will

also find much that has been vaguely entertained and formulated by themselves given that "hard gem-like" quality which was Pater's aim in language as in thought. The Epicurean outlook is one of those which is summarized.

"A hogg of Epicurus' styte": that was Burton's pleasant version of an ancient phrase. It is certainly inapplicable to Epicurus or his serious disciples. No one, probably, has ever set up a school in order, on principle, to teach drunkenness and lasciviousness: the pagan sensualism of the brilliant Flavian is not Epicureanism and has no connection with what was essentially a doctrine of temperate and discriminating enjoyment, arrived at after a steady and serious examination of the known facts about life, death, and human nature. In Marius's brief diary there is a passage in which this frugal and intellectual quality is emphasized.

Often have I maintained that, in this generous southern country at least, Epicureanism is the special philosophy of the poor. How little I myself really need, when people leave me alone, with the intellectual powers at work serenely. The drops of falling water, a few wild flowers with their priceless fragrance, a few tufts even of half-dead leaves, changing colour in the quiet of a room that has but light and shadow in it; these, for a susceptible mind, might well do duty for all the glory of Augustus.

So thought the Augustus of that time: the passage



must surely recall that page in the *Meditations* on which the Stoic Emperor speaks of the loveliness of the ripe and gaping fruit. The gulf is not so very wide here between the Epicurean and the Stoic: there is a temperamental difference, one being milder and less reluctant to accept the perishable beauty than the other, who can never look at a body without thinking of a corpse. What is not quite evident is why Pater chose to call his hero Marius the Epicurean rather than Marius the —Anything Else. If Pater means to suggest that the Marius he draws had the sort of nature which, historically, was attached to that very fine “stye” we may, if we like, take his word for it, though this most fastidious of connoisseurs, even when most enchanted by the delights of sense, never had a kiss and seldom, if ever, a flagon. If the title is meant to convey (as to the uninstructed novice it may convey) that Marius was a man with a set philosophy which gave him a way of life and a test for experience it is very misleading. Marius, if his career be looked at as a whole, can only be called an Epicurean philosopher in so far as he was always an epicure in philosophies, and in so far as Christianity can be regarded as the crown and consummation of Epicureanism. Marius is far from being a member of a school: unless the *animæ naturaliter Christianæ* can be regarded as a kind of school guided in certain directions not by their reasons but by their intuitions. Pater knew far

better what he was going to do with Marius than Marius ever knew what he was going to do with himself.

For Marius, though he progressed, was an Aeolian harp to both sensations and ideas, which came to him in the order which best suited Pater's design, and which always struck music from his soul and from his creator's tongue. The book, as we have seen, is less a narrative than a series of little essays on Marius's thoughts about life and religion, with Pater's thoughts often added as a commentary to them: external events being, mostly, reduced to the minimum required to set each train of reflection, ardour or revulsion, in motion. Mood after mood, speculation after speculation, is imputed to him, sometimes as a result of Pater's own intense experience, sometimes because the mood or the speculation (given Marius's gentle and honest heart) seemed inevitable in the circumstances of his age, and therefore had to be laboriously bodied forth. His first religious impressions are associated with ritual and the past:

What had been in the main a matter of family pride with his father, was sustained by a native instinct of devotion in the young Marius. A sense of conscious powers external to ourselves, pleased or displeased by the right or wrong conduct of every circumstance of daily life—that conscience, of which the old Roman religion was a formal, habitual recognition, was become in

him a powerful current of feeling and observance. The old-fashioned, partly puritanic awe, the power of which Wordsworth noted and valued so highly in a northern peasantry, had its counterpart in the feeling of the Roman lad, as he passed the spot, "touched of heaven," where the lightning had struck dead an aged labourer in the field: an upright stone, still with mouldering garlands about it, marked the place.

That dramatically incongruous mention of Wordsworth is symbolical of one of Pater's weaknesses as a story-teller. A man eager to capture the reader with his story of persons and events might have mentioned anybody prior to Marius—Hesiod, Theocritus, Ennius, Virgil, or whoever might supply the parallel and adorn the tale. He would have known that the mention of Wordsworth would destroy illusion by reminding us of the presence of a nineteenth-century Pater who had read a nineteenth-century Wordsworth and invented a second-century Marius. But this was *not* primarily intended to be a novel: the remarkable thing is that, concentrated as he was on the argument and on his depiction of various phases in religious experience, Pater should have held our attention with his "fable" as he does. Marius, as a youth, developed from acceptance to question, and, in his quiet manner, took every supposed way of life in his hand and scrutinized it. He saw, in succession, some of the most famous of living talkers and thinkers: he was not blind to the spell of beauty in action; he rejoiced

in the glitter of the temporal, which is contemptuous or oblivious of the eternal: he studied the old books and the established liturgies, lest some secret might be lurking there which might be the key to his rest. The quest was not entirely barren for him. He evidently had, as Pater so nobly had, strong "intellectual interests": in other words, he could evidently find relish in putting his qualifying parentheses between commas, and in exhibiting the contrasted merits and defects of an inadequate system, even when it was clear that he was merely dallying with a hedgerow rose, or bramble, instead of following the "gleam" to which he had dedicated himself. Yet that "gleam" is never lost sight of. The fascination of these strange happy Christians was already closing on him, all unawares; and the end was now near when he wrote in his diary of all the sorrow in the world, and how the sorrow would be all the worse were this death-beleaguered world of men and women more nearly perfect: "I would that there were one even as I behind this vain show of things." And again,

A protest comes, out of the very depths of man's radically hopeless condition in the world, with the energy of one of those suffering yet prevailing deities, of which old poetry tells. Dared one hope that there is a heart, even as ours, in that divine "Assistant" of one's thoughts—a heart even as mine, behind this vain show of things!

With exquisite art, with perfect spiritual tact, Pater places that chapter of self-communing in which Marius almost touches the prophetic and apostolic, as an earlier pagan has been deemed to touch it in *Tu Marcellus eris*, immediately before another chapter in which Marius is thrown violently in contact with that new religion which was proclaiming, with ineffably cheerful countenance, the existence and omnipresence of the "Assistant" for whom he yearned. Everything is done to heighten the contrast. We have been conducted through a long sequence of arguments as to the goods of life and the end of it: argument has ceased now, there is none of it. There is hardly even mention made of a revelation (for that might provoke argument): we are merely shown the concrete results of that revelation: a great light of joy shining in the eyes of humble people worshipping in secluded villas or dark catacombs, and an air of chivalry and kindness never dreamed of before, least of all by Aurelius, one of the chief of pagan saints. For years Marius, though earnest and plain-living himself, had been wandering in easy places listening to famous philosophers discoursing from couches or leaning over marble balconies whilst the slaves brought them what they wanted. Now, in this underground world to which his friend Cornelius (a kind of Roman Sir Galahad) has brought him, he finds himself with people too happy to debate, anxious only to proclaim

their great news of glad tidings, willing to proclaim it to the death, weeping and praising God whilst their fellows, men and women, are subjected to the most barbarous martyrdoms, and their own turn may be to-morrow.

"It had always been his policy," Pater says, "through all his pursuit of experience, to take flight in time from any too disturbing passion, from any sort of affection likely to quicken his pulses beyond the point at which the quiet work of life was practicable." What the "quiet work" was we are not told: Pater was probably lapsing into thoughts of lectures at Brasenose. It is conceivable that a "disturbing passion" might have overtaken Marius (as he has been shown to us and as we have learned to feel affection for him) after he had read that terrible and magnificent letter from the persecuted churches in France: but Pater dodges the issue, ends the chapter with the letter, and begins the new one with Marius after an interval, still pursuing his normal quest. He never does, so far as we are privy to his conversations and his thoughts, become informed as to the history and doctrines of these Christians. He seems, having met people who live well instead of merely talking about it, to be satisfied to judge the tree by its fruits: and in the end, knowing that he has found nothing better on earth, he is content to die an inadvertent martyr to the Faith of which he knows so little:

The people round his bed were praying fervently—*Abi' Abi' Anima Christiana!* In the moments of his extreme helplessness their mystic bread had been placed, had descended like a snow-flake from the sky, between his lips. Gentle fingers had applied to hands and feet, to all those old passage-ways of the senses, through which the world had come and gone for him, now so dim and obstructed, a medicinale oil. It was the same people, who, in the grey, austere evening of that day, took up his remains, and buried them secretly, with their accustomed prayers; but with joy also, holding his death, according to their generous view in this matter, to have been of the nature of a martyrdom; and martyrdom, as the church had always said, a kind of sacrament with plenary grace.

For many reasons it must be admitted that Pater chose his period well, since this was to be his *dénouement*. The period was one congenial to speculation. It was at the end of "the Peace of the Antonines"—an autumnal peace, and this was the last of it, with the worm in the ripe fruit, Faustina in the Palace, Commodus to succeed the rigid Emperor, and the barbarians again beginning to boil over the frontiers—but a peace nevertheless. At an earlier date Marius would not have been likely to have come into personal touch with Christians; at a later he would have had less leisure for his ample peregrinations through the world, and he would not have found that morning freshness in the Church. It was necessary, too, that the pagan

world should be "looking its best" in order that the contrast which it was Pater's business to make should be fair and final. The Roman world was never more peaceful, nor Roman society ever more humane, than under the Antonines: Gibbon has even maintained that no recorded epoch has ever seen mankind so happy. Nor could a pagan Roman more fully equipped than Marius with the Christian virtues have been discovered or devised. Yet even Marius perceived, in his friend Cornelius, and in the little band of Christians whom he met, a love and radiance which had never before Christianity been known or even imagined. He is first curious because of Cornelius, the handsome officer-convert: wanting to discover "the hidden source from which the beauty and strength of a nature, so persistently fresh, in the midst of a somewhat jaded world, might be derived." Antonine Rome knew public and private charity, charity organization even:

But what pagan charity was doing tardily, and as if with the painful calculation of old age, the church was doing, almost without thinking about it, with all the liberal enterprise of youth, because it was her very being thus to do. "You fail to realize your own good intentions," she seems to say, to pagan virtue, pagan kindness. She identified herself with those intentions and advanced them with an unparalleled freedom and largeness. The gentle Seneca would have reverent burial provided even for the dead body of a



criminal. Yet when a certain woman collected for interment the insulted remains of Nero, the pagan world surmised that she must be a Christian: only a Christian would have been likely to conceive so chivalrous a devotion towards mere wretchedness.

This is said with exquisite clarity and truth: a finer passage still is that in which Pater describes "divine service" as Marius attended it: the mixture of ranks, all made level by faith, hope, and charity, the grave joy of the young men, the newly-found content on the wrinkled faces of the old, the pervading air of nobility as though "cleansing and kindling flame" had been at work, the general appearance of the people as of "the earliest handsel, or pattern, of a new world, from the very face of which discontent had passed away." Marius had hated the cruelties and oppressions of his civilization, but had not dreamed of a power that should abolish them by begetting, or, rather, bringing to light, a general hatred of them. Many were kind to children, some were kind to slaves, and all should be: but here was a religion in which there was no bond and free and which regarded the meanest of negroes as heir to a heavenly throne. Curtius, than whom Rome had known no nobler legendary figure, had leapt into the gulf for his City; but Christ had died for strangers, born and unborn, in the uttermost parts of the earth, for Man, not for a people, a breed, or a society. The greatest of the Greeks would

scarcely have died, or encouraged a brother to die, for a Persian slave, and they certainly would not have conceived any of their gods as ordering them to do so. No philosopher who had the least belief in, or attachment to, the ancient cosmogonies could possibly frame, in connection with these, a system of catholic morals. Prometheus (whose fate was scarcely encouraging) was an example of self-sacrifice and love of mankind; certain gods might take a fancy to be patrons of sailors or smiths; one was even a co-operator with the doctors in the merciful art of healing. Mostly these old gods were themselves Epicureans in the most popular sense of the word, haphazard in their kindnesses and their cruelties, arbitrary and in their terrene attachments, jealous, touchy, quick to take offence: cruel and lascivious, or cruel and cold—the best of them only redeemed by the attributes of physical beauty and grace—sulky gods, spoiled athletes, squabblers and intriguers, sultans and bullies, wantons and disdainful virgins. Morality could find no sanctions in pagan theology, unless the theology were of that exalted type which refined the gods away. The gods asked for piety towards themselves, but they did so much as issue *one* commandment for “domestic” use. But here, in the Old Covenant and the New of the Christian religion, was a comprehensive code and a spirit for the interpretation and the expansion of the code. Here was a

God who had not merely made man in his own image but become man, and for the sake of man suffered the worst of human pangs. What use were they, the old philosophies of resignation or discreet enjoyment, of cynicism or hedonism, to a lifelong slave or to parents leaning over the body of a dead child? Here was a radiant gospel bringing to both the consolation of a beatific hope, a pitiful deity who would bring his servants to "a world that rights the injustice of this," the "help of the helpless," who should wipe away all tears from their eyes. All-Fathers there had been, north, south, and east, many a one; bearded dignitaries who, when they thought fit, could wield the sword of justice. Capricious deities there had been, capable of a fond partiality for mortal favourites and expecting obsequiousness in return. Never before had there been a God of Love; and a God of such Love, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, who had been despised like the lowest of mankind and tortured like the most miserable, the patient shepherd of lost and night-beleaguered lambs, the light shining in darkness, the voice of utter peace and charity and promise, in death-chamber, in storm-beset ship, in blood-soaked arena. On the horizon of a Marius the knowledge of such a religion must have dawned like the first of all the rainbows in the world; they were something new to human experience, these old men and young girls, children of Cana and Calvary, who sang joy-

fully when going to their deaths, and blessed their tormentors. Christianity, coming in first shock to a Marius, must have seemed a revelation, even though he were vague as to its founder's claims or positively doubtful about his godhead.

Pater's endeavours to recover the conflict of opinions as it might have been waged in a very delicate pagan mind, and to present pictures of the fine flowers of the two competing ways of life, are very conscientious and laborious: and call for an effort on the part of the reader. The book, as a collection of lucidly and winningly enunciated philosophical hypotheses, is a great *tour de force*. Yet, curiously (if one reader's experience be typical), it is not its speculative side that gives it its most lasting hold or remains longest in the memory. The provisional conjectures and beliefs of Marius, like our own, make their temporary impressions, leave their unseen traces, and are gone: what remains with us, after some lapse of time, are certain pictures, an atmosphere, the sense of a character. Pater in this book added to that landscape of antiquity which every educated man carries about in his head. Soberly grouping things according to concepts and with a proper respect for the verification of alleged facts, those who have never tasted honey-dew or the milk of Paradise—or any of us with an effort—can clearly distinguish between things Roman and things Greek, think of the two sets of

gods as distinct though kindred, remember, whenever a name is mentioned, whether it comes in the category of historic, semi-historic, or mythical, to preserve a division between the reliable records of chroniclers and the fanciful glosses of literary men. But to most of us the past appears rather in images than in concepts, and we habitually forget (hardly desiring to remember) the difference between invention and legend, legend and scientific fact. The Trojan war, it appears, really took place; it is interesting to know that: but even when we supposed that its occurrence was as fanciful as its cause, in practice we forgot this and thought of Ajax and Ulysses as being persons as "real" as Pericles and Aristophanes. Not only that, but we found the mind turning quite habitually, and as though moving on the same plane, from some historic figure such as Leonidas to such people as Troilus and Cressida. Troilus, at best, was a nobody as for Cressida, she is, really, nothing but a misprint;—some mediæval having read "Criseide" for the name of Achilles' captive Briseis—whence Chaucer's tale and Shakespeare's. And these names serve to remind us that the past remains plastic, that it still proliferates and grows; and that art does as much for it as archæology. Since Keats there is a Lamia who was no more than a name in Philostratus, and "grey-haired Saturn" is more vivid than any ancient made him; since Swinburne, Atalanta means more than

before; Landor, Racine, and a thousand of others have made their contributions, small or large, to the development of the ancient fabric. Art will even tyrannize over the fact: it is no use telling us that Cleopatra was a plump, good-tempered and rather virtuous little matron when Shakespeare has for ever convinced us that she was not: whatever might come to light, Brutus must remain Shakespeare's Brutus and Antony Shakespeare's Antony—two inhabitants of a land called "Greece and Rome," which included vast and varied panoramas and multitudes of persons, the Trojan Horse and the Roman tortoise, the elephants of Pyrrhus and Hannibal, the Nemean lion, and the Calydonian boar, the bivouac fires in the moonlight where the sea lay calm between the Troad and Tenedos, the death-like stillness of the camp where Brutus's boy played to him on the eve of doom, the cry of the ten thousand when they saw the Aegean, the wail over Varus and the legions lost in the German forests, the beehives and white oxen of Mantua, the trampling horses of the sun, Polydeuces, Dionysius and Nero, the Sybil of Cumæ and the oracle of Delphi, a thousand kings, a hundred emperors, a host of Philosophers, poets, soldiers, citizens, slaves, fights, triumphs, games, banquets, colloquies in gardens, and lonely voyages, piety, patriotism, courage, love, cruelty, oppression, fortitude, degeneration, the Aphrodite of Cnidos, the

Olympian Zeus, the Venus de Medici, Simonides, Meleager, Catullus, Lesbia, the Widow of Ephesus, and the Spartan Boy. Tumbling out come these, pell-mell, each suggesting the next, with myriads more behind them. There is some sort of order and shape in the vast display: we are always aware that Adonis dies in the first act and that Marcus Aurelius lives somewhere in the fifth: but we do not make a practice of remembering that Adonis's wanton never existed and Aurelius's did, each being a real personality to us.

These two peninsulas and their attendant islands lie for us in a pool of light, and almost timeless. There was a vast world around them, immemorial China, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and the less literate nations of mankind. Such, here, is our education, and so close are our links with these civilizations that, after all these years, and after all this archæology, we still feel ourselves to be "inside" a continuous Graeco-Roman camp. All who were not Greeks or Romans, from Penthesilea, Queen of the Amazons, to that priest who told Herodotus of the secrets of Egypt, from Brennus the victorious Gaul to Vercingetorix the beaten, are to us besiegers beyond the walls—foreigners, interlopers, barbarians.

This aggregation of states, empires, utopias and fairylands which we call "the ancient world" is, as we have said, constantly in process of expansion, and Pater added something to it. Not so much in the

way of visible scenes as might have been expected from the author of *The Child in the House*: the pictures in this book are, mostly, rather evoked than painted, and the evocation of the physical is not the author's first concern. Sienkiewicz has no rival in Pater, though there are a few memorable cool glimpses of city and country. Some of his portraits with backgrounds, however, do add something to our permanent treasure of classical experience. The charming picture of Marcus Aurelius himself, fabricated entirely from a bust, the *Meditations* and the correspondence with Fronto, leaves us with a fuller and more vivid Marcus than we had before. The glimpses of Lucian and Apuleius supplement our previous knowledge with information that seems completely veridical. Lucian was the easier to deduce and is the more simply described: the man (Anatole France in his gentler moods) is so evident in his works. Apuleius, the jocular and rather showy Platonist, half serious, half not, coarse and fantastic, with a touch of George Meredith and a touch of Pantaloon, is, as we can deduce him from his works, but a list of attributes, and Pater, however summarily, did breathe life into these and add Apuleius to the ancient characters which are alive for us. But his greatest achievement was his imposition upon his readers of the character, adventures and fate of his central figure, Marius.

Marius the Epicurean, the quiet young man from



"White-Nights," the friend of the handsome Catullan sensualist Flavian and the soldier and Christian gentleman Cornelius, is not clearly drawn from the outside: we guess at his features, and we are not allowed to hear his words: he never "does anything" or "takes steps" which result in crystallizing his personality for us: yet in retrospect, because of the movements of his mind and heart, his disinterestedness, charity and love of beauty, he lives for us. Whilst we are reading the book he is but a gentle ghost to us: he gains solidity with time and distance: we create him, as it were, for ourselves from hints and materials given us by Pater. So, in the end, to some who have read this strange book Marius is as real as Marcus: the Emperor's reign is the reign which saw Marius the Epicurean pondering life and death, his grave hours softly illumined by the Christian dawn. Before Pater there was not on record a pagan Roman so tender and sensitive as Marius; possibly there never was one in Rome; but there is one now. If not "the noblest Roman of them all" in the old Stoic and heroic sense, he is certainly the sweetest Roman of them all. Against that faintly drawn and coloured background of Antonine Italy and Antonine Rome (also a creation, very careful, of Pater's) he lives for us, a redeeming feature of the Roman civilization, a type (who knows?) of many more, a person who arouses pity and affection, an explanation, so

far as he goes, of the manner in which Christianity, with its well-spring for the thirsty, spread at last even among the educated at Rome. It is not until several generations later, in St. Augustine's *Confessions*, that we encounter a convert more intelligent, forcible, and vivid, who reveals in his own heart and brain the image of the bitter and momentous religious struggles which were raging in the world outside him. St. Augustine would hardly have been a friend of Pater's.

## JOHNSON'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO OTHER PEOPLE'S WORKS

**D**R. JOHNSON is often charged with constitutional indolence. The impression that he was inactive is due to two things. One is the fact that Boswell knew him only in his old age, after his life-work (except in a social way) was done; the other is that he perpetually reproached himself for not working. In point of fact, during his early and middle periods he was prodigiously industrious, acquiring and dispersing that approximation to universal knowledge which was in his time possible; and his contributions to other persons' works were amongst the by-products of a powerful energy and an illimitable generosity.

These contributions may be easily sub-divided into two classes: dedications and prefaces which were mere additions to the books which others wrote, and material alterations made by Johnson to the texts of such books. His motives were also varied. Sometimes he merely "did it to oblige," sometimes he was affectionately helping a dear friend, and sometimes he was impelled by what, in a combative mood, he once declared to be the only incentive to writing, namely,

the desire for gain. This last he bluntly admitted when accounting for the Preface which, in 1756, he wrote for Rolt's *Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. He was asked what he knew of Rolt, and he said:

Sir, I never saw the man, and I never read the book. The booksellers wanted a Preface to a dictionary of Trade and Commerce. I knew very well what such a Dictionary should be, and I wrote a Preface accordingly.

This suggests that Johnson would have been a perfect advertisement-writer. The ideal advertisement-writer does just that: forms an opinion as to precisely what a soap or a tobacco should be and writes his advertisement accordingly.

A picture of Johnson assisting people in the uncommercial way is given by Boswell on a much later page of the *Life*:

This letter crossed me on the road to London, where I arrived on Monday, March 15th, and next morning at a late hour found Dr. Johnson sitting over his tea attended by Mrs. Desmoulins, Mr. Levett, and a clergyman who had come to submit some poetical pieces to his revision. It is wonderful what a number and variety of writers, some of them even unknown to him, prevailed on his good nature to look over their works, and suggest corrections and improvements.

My arrival interrupted for a little while the important business of this representative of Bayes; upon its being resumed, I found that the

subject under immediate consideration was a translation, yet in manuscript, of the *Carmen Seculare* of Horace, which had this year been set to music, and performed as a public entertainment in London, for the joint benefit of Monsieur Philidor and Signor Baretti. When Johnson had done reading, the author asked him bluntly, "If upon the whole, it was a good translation?" Johnson, whose regard for truth was uncommonly strict, seemed to be puzzled for a moment what answer to make, as he certainly could not honestly commend the performance; with exquisite address he evaded the question thus: "Sir, I do not say that it may not be made a very good translation." Here nothing whatever in favour of the performance was affirmed, and yet the writer was not shocked. A printed *Ode to the Warlike Genius of Britain* came next in review; the bard was a lank, bony figure, with short black hair; he was writhing himself in agitation while Johnson read, and showing his teeth in a grin of earnestness, exclaimed in broken sentences, and in a keen, sharp tone, "Is that Poetry, Sir? Is it Pindar?" Johnson: "Why, sir, there is here a great deal of what is called poetry." Then, turning to me, the poet cried, "My muse has not been long upon the town, and (pointing to the ode) it trembles under the hand of the great critic." Johnson, in a tone of displeasure, asked him "Why do you praise Anson?" I did not trouble him by asking the reason for this question. He proceeded, "Here is an error, Sir; you have made Genius feminine." "Palpable, Sir, (cried the enthusiast) I know it. But (in a lower tone) it was to pay a compliment to the Duchess of Devonshire, with which her Grace was pleased.

She is walking across Coxheath, in a military uniform, and I suppose her to be the Genius of Britain." Johnson: "Sir, you are giving a reason for it; but that will not make it right. You may have a reason why two and two should make five; but they will still make but four."

The Dedications that Johnson wrote for other people are numerous. It should be borne in mind that in his own work he was more than sparing of Dedications. Apart from the Dedication to Chesterfield which missed the post, there is, I believe, only one Dedication in his works, and the signature of that is imputed to the bookseller. But where other people were concerned he was fully aware of the advantages of the patron and prepared to dedicate freely. "I think," he said, "that I have dedicated to all the Royal Family round." The Royal Family was the Royal Family of Hanover, and it may be presumed that Johnson thought a man was no more on his oath in a dedication than he was in a lapidary inscription. A specimen of what he could do for the House of Hanover is the Dedication which he wrote, in 1763, for Hoole's *Tasso*. It is addressed to the Queen and runs:

Madam,

To approach the high and illustrious has been in all ages the privilege of Poets; and though translators cannot justly claim the same honour, yet they naturally follow their authors as attendants; and I hope that in return for having

enabled Tasso to diffuse his fame through the British dominions, I may be introduced by him to the presence of YOUR MAJESTY. TASSO has a peculiar claim to YOUR MAJESTY'S favour as follower and panegyrist of the house of Este, which has one common ancestor with the house of Hanover; and in reviewing his life it is not easy to forbear a wish that he had lived in a happier time, when he might among the descendants of that illustrious family have found a more liberal and potent patronage. I cannot but observe, MADAM, how unequally reward is proportioned to merit, when I reflect that the happiness which was withheld from TASSO is reserved for me; and that the poem which once hardly procured to its author the countenance of the Princess of Ferrara, has attracted to its translator the favourable notice of a BRITISH QUEEN. Had this been the fate of TASSO, he would have been able to have celebrated the condescension of YOUR MAJESTY in nobler language, but could not have felt it with more ardent gratitude, than, MADAM, YOUR MAJESTY'S most faithful and devoted servant.

He had already written in 1762 for the Reverend Dr. Kennedy, Rector of Bradley, in Derbyshire, in what Boswell calls "a strain of very courtly elegance," a dedication to the King of that gentleman's work, entitled *A Complete System of Astronomical Chronology, unfolding the Scriptures*. Boswell says, feeling it necessary to say so, "he had certainly looked at this work before it was printed." In 1766 he wrote what Boswell terms "the noble dedication to the King" of

Gwynn's *London and Westminster Improved*. This Mr. Gwynn was an architect, and five years before Johnson had "lent his friendly assistance" to correct a pamphlet written by him and entitled *Thoughts on the Coronation of George III*. This is the Dedication to King George in Gwynn's *London and Westminster Improved*:

To the  
KING

Sir,

The patronage of works which have a tendency towards advancing the happiness of mankind, naturally belongs to great Princes; and publick good, in which publick elegance is comprised, has ever been the object of your Majesty's regard.

In the following pages your Majesty, I flatter myself, will find that I have endeavoured at extensive and general usefulness. Knowing, therefore, your Majesty's early attention to the polite arts, and more particular affection for the study of architecture, I was encouraged to hope that the work which I now presume to lay before your Majesty, might be thought not unworthy your Royal Favour; and that the protection which your Majesty always affords to those who mean well, may be extended to

Sir,

Your Majesty's  
most dutiful subject,  
and most obedient  
and most humble servant  
JOHN GWYNN.



Next year he produced one more dedication to the King, namely, that prefixed in the ingenious Mr. Adams's *Treatises on the Globes*. Long after, in 1778, still another Dedication to King George came from his pen: that which appears in the first edition of Sir Joshua Reynolds's celebrated *Discourses*:

### TO THE KING

The regular progress of cultivated life is from necessities to accommodations, from accommodations to ornaments. By your illustrious predecessors were established Marts for manufacturers and Colleges for Science: but for the arts of elegance, those arts by which manufacturers are embellished, and science is refined, to found an Academy was reserved for Your Majesty.

Had such patronage been without effect, there had been reason to believe that Nature had, by some insurmountable impediment, obstructed our proficiency; but the annual improvement of the Exhibitions which Your Majesty has been pleased to encourage, shows that only encouragement had been wanting.

To give advice to those who are contending for royal liberality has been for some years the duty of my station in the Academy; and these Discourses hope for your Majesty's acceptance, as well-intended endeavours to incite that emulation which your notice has kindled, and direct those studies which your bounty has rewarded.

May it please Your Majesty,

Your Majesty's

Most dutiful Servant,

And most faithful Subject,

JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

Space does not permit the quotation of all the dedications he wrote; I may quote some and enumerate the rest. In 1756, Boswell says, "This year Mr. William Payne, brother of the respectable bookseller of that name, published an *Introduction to the Game of Draughts* to which Dr. Johnson contributed a dedication to the Earl of Rochford, and a Preface both of which are admirably adapted to the treatise to which they are prefixed."

To the Right Honourable

WILLIAM HENRY

Earl of Rochford, etc., etc.

My Lord,

When I take the liberty of addressing to Your Lordship *A Treatise on the Game of DRAUGHTS*, I easily foresee that I shall be in danger of suffering Ridicule on one hand, while I am gaining Honour on the other, and that many who may envy me the Distinction of approaching you, will deride the present I presume to offer.

Had I considered this little Volume as having no Purpose beyond that of teaching a Game, I should indeed have left it to take its Fate without a Patron. Triflers may find or make any Thing a Trifle; but since it is the great Characteristic of a wise Man to see Events in their Causes, to obviate consequences, and ascertain Contingencies, Your Lordship will think nothing a trifle by which the Mind is inured to Caution, Foresight and Circumspection. The same Skill, and often the same Degree of Skill, is exerted in great and little Things, and Your Lordship may

sometimes exercise, at a harmless Game, those Abilities, which have been so happily employed in the Service of your Country. I am,

My Lord,  
Your Lordship's  
Most obliged,  
Most obedient  
and Most Humble Servant  
WILLIAM PAYNE.

In 1758 he wrote the Preface or Dedication to John Angell's *Stenography, or Shorthand Improved*.

To the Most Noble  
CHARLES  
Duke of

Richmond, Lenox, Aubigny, etc.

May it please Your Grace,

The improvement of Arts and Sciences has always been esteemed laudable; and in proportion to their Utility and Advantage to Mankind, they have generally gained the Patronage of Persons the most distinguished for Birth, Learning and Reputation in the World. This is an art undoubtedly of Public Utility, and which has been cultivated by Persons of distinguished Abilities, as will appear from its History. But as most of their Systems have been defective, clogged with a multiplicity of Rules, and perplexed by arbitrary, intricate, and impracticable Schemes, I have endeavoured to rectify their Defects, to adapt it to all Capacities, and render it of general, lasting, and extensive Benefit. . . .

etc.

JOHN ANGELL.

In 1760 he wrote for Signor Baretti the dedication of his *Italian and English Dictionary*, to the Marquis of Alven, then Envoy-Extraordinary from Spain at the Court of St. James's. In 1762 he wrote the Dedication of Mrs. Lenox's *The Female Quixote*—one of a number of Quixotes popular in the century. He had previously in 1753 favoured this lady with a Dedication to the Earl of Ossory of her *Shakespeare Illustrated*, and in 1759:

From that liberality which never failed, when called upon to assist other labourers in literature, found time to translate for Mrs. Lenox's English version of Brumoy "A Dissertation on the Greek Comedy" and the "General Conclusion of the Book."

His French, be it remembered, was extremely good, as also his Italian, although when encountering foreigners, he greatly preferred to talk Latin. Here we find continuous help given to one person, a lady, indeed, for whose success he had been solicitous from the beginning. One of the finest passages in Hawkins's life concerns her:

Mrs. Lenox, a lady now well known to the literary world, had written a novel entitled *The Life of Harriet Stuart* (supposed to be her own history), which in the spring of 1751 was ready for publication. One evening at the (Ivy Lane) Club, Johnson proposed to us celebrating the birth of Mrs. Lenox's first literary child, as he called her book, by a whole night spent in

festivity. . . . The place appointed was the Devil Tavern, and there, about the hour of eight, Mrs. Lenox and her husband, and a lady of her acquaintance, as also the club and friends to the number of near twenty assembled. The supper was elegant, and Johnson had directed that a magnificent hot apple-pie should make part of it, and this he would have stuck with bay-leaves, because, forsooth, Mrs. Lenox was an authoress, and had written verses; and further he had prepared for her a crown of laurel with which—but not till he had invoked the Muses with some ceremonies of his own invention—he encircled her brows. The night passed, as must be imagined, in pleasant conversation and harmless mirth, intermingled at different periods with the refreshments of coffee and tea. About five, Johnson's face shone with meridian splendour, though his drink had been only lemonade; but the far greater part of the company had deserted the colours of Bacchus and were with difficulty rallied to partake of a second refreshment of coffee, which was scarcely ended when the day began to dawn. This phenomenon began to put us in mind of our reckoning; but the waiters were all so overcome with sleep that it was two hours before a bill could be had, and it was not till near eight that the creaking of the street door gave the signal for our departure.

In 1763 he wrote the Dedication to Bennett's edition of Lord Shaftesbury's works; Davies, the bookseller, indeed, says that Johnson was actually the editor. In 1765 he wrote "part of" the Dedication to Percy's *Reliques*. The Dedication runs thus:

To Elizabeth, Late Duchess and Countess of Northumberland, in her own right Baroness Percy, etc., etc., etc., who, being noble heiress, to many great families of our ancient Nobility, employed the princely fortune, and sustained the illustrious honours, which she derived from them, through her whole life, with the greatest dignity, generosity and spirit, and who for her many public and private virtues, will ever be remembered, as one of the first characters of her time, THIS LITTLE WORK was originally dedicated, and as it sometimes afforded her amusement, and was highly distinguished by her indulgent approbation, it is now, with the utmost regard, respect and gratitude, consecrated, to her beloved and honoured memory.

This Elizabeth was the heiress of the ancient Percys; she married Sir Hugh Smithson, a city man who changed his name and is the ancestor of the modern Percys. The Dedication was accounted for by the Bishop's belief, not yet authenticated by genealogists, that he was a relation. What Johnson wrote I do not know: probably not *This Little Work*.

Finally:

Early in this year (1777) came out, in two volumes quarto, the posthumous works of the learned Dr. Zachary Pearce, Bishop of Rochester, being "A Commentary with Notes, on the Four Evangelists and the Acts of the Apostles," with other theological pieces. Johnson had now an opportunity of making a grateful return to that excellent prelate, who, we have seen, was the only person who gave him any assistance in the

compilation of his Dictionary. The Bishop had left some account of his life and character, written by himself. To this Johnson made some valuable additions, and also furnished to the Editor, the Reverend Mr. Derby a Dedication which I shall here insert, both because it will appear at this time with peculiar propriety; and because it will tend to propagate and increase that "fervour of *Loyalty*" which in me, who boast of the name of TORY, is not only a principle, but a passion.

## TO THE KING

SIR,

I presume to lay before your Majesty the last labours of a learned Bishop, who died in the toils and duties of his calling. He is now beyond the reach of all earthly honours and rewards; and only the hope of inciting others to imitate him makes it now fit to be remembered, that he enjoyed in his life the favour of your Majesty.

The tumultary life of Princes seldom permits them to survey the wide extent of national interest without losing sight of private merit; to exhibit qualities which may be imitated by the highest and the humblest of mankind; and to be at once amiable and great.

Such characters, if now and then they appear in history, are contemplated with admiration. May it be the ambition of all your subjects to make haste with their tribute of reverence; and as posterity may learn from your Majesty how Kings should live, may they learn likewise from your people how they should be honoured. I am, may it please your Majesty, with the most profound respect, your Majesty's most dutiful and devoted subject and servant.

From Dedications we may slide, by a natural gradation, to Prefaces. The first Preface I can trace is that written in 1748 for Dodsley:

Mr. Dodsley this year brought out his *Praeceptor*, one of the most valuable books for the improvement of young minds that has appeared in any language, and to this meritorious work Johnson furnished "The Preface" containing a general sketch of the book, with a short and perspicuous recommendation of each article as also "The Vision of Theodore the Hermit found in his Cell," a most beautiful allegory of human life, under the figure of ascending the mountain of existence.

Here, with a miscellany, we are treading on the frontiers of periodical literature, which we had better not cross. In 1758, ten years later, he wrote the Preface to John Payne's *New Tables of Interest*:

Among the writers of fiction, whose business is to furnish that entertainment which Fancy perpetually demands, it is a standing plea, that the beauties of nature are now exhausted, that imitation has exerted all its power, and that nothing more can be done for the service of their mistress, than to exhibit a perpetual transposition of known objects, and draw new pictures, not by introducing new images, but by giving new lights and shades, a new arrangement and colouring to the old. This plea has been cheerfully admitted; and Fancy, led by the hand of a skilful guide, treads over again the flowery path she has often trod before, as much



enamoured with every new diversification of the same prospect, as with the first appearance of it.

In the regions of Science, however, there is not the same indulgence: the Understanding and the Judgment travel there in the pursuit of Truth, whom they always expect to find in one simple form, free from the disguise of dress and ornament; and as they travel with laborious step and a fixed eye, they are content to stop when the shades of night darken the prospect and patiently wait the radiance of a new morning, to lead them forward in the path they have chosen, which, however thorny or however steep, is severely preferred to the most pleasing excursions that bring them no nearer to the object of their search. The plea, therefore, that nature is exhausted, and that nothing is left to gratify the mind but different combinations of the same ideas, when urged as a reason for multiplying unnecessary labours among the sons of Science, is not so readily admitted: the Understanding when in possession of Truth, is satisfied with the simple acquisition; and not, like Fancy, inclined to wander after new pleasures in the diversification of objects already known, which, perhaps may lead to Error. . . .

The power of Arithmetical numbers has been tried to a vast extent, and variously applied to the improvement both of business and science. In particular, so many calculations have been made with respect to the value and use of money, that some serve only for speculation and amusement; and there is great opportunity for selecting a few that are peculiarly adapted to common business . . . and to answer the purposes of

that business, in some degree more perfectly than has hitherto been done, the following Tables are published. . . .

Among the Brokers of Stocks are men of great honour and probity, who are candid and open in all their transactions, and incapable of mean and selfish purposes; and it is to be lamented that a market of such importance as the present state of this nation has made theirs, should be brought into any discredit by the intrusion of bad men, who, instead of serving their country, and procuring an honest subsistence in the army or the fleet, endeavour to maintain luxurious tables and splendid equipages by sporting with the public credit.

It is not long since the evil of stock-jobbing was risen to such an enormous height, as to threaten great injury to every actual proprietor. . . . But this evil, after many unsuccessful attempts of the Legislature to conquer it, was, like many another, at length subdued by its own violence, and the reputable Stock-brokers seem now to have it in their power effectually to prevent its return . . . by opposing every effort made for its recovery by the desperate sons of fortune, who, not having the courage of highwaymen, take 'Change-alley rather than the road, etc. . . .

On one occasion he was deceived by the author, and wrote a Preface to a fraudulent compilation:

The Reverend Dr. Douglas having with uncommon acuteness clearly detected a gross forgery and imposition upon the public by William Lauder, a Scotch schoolmaster, who had, with equal impudence and ingenuity, represented

Milton as a plagiarist from certain modern Latin poets, Johnson who had so far been imposed upon as to furnish a Preface and Postscript to his work, now dictated a letter for Lauder, addressed to Dr. Douglas, acknowledging his fraud in terms of suitable contrition.

This extraordinary attempt of Lauder was no sudden effort. He had brooded over it for many years; and to this hour it is uncertain what his principal motive was, unless it were a vain notion of his superiority, in being able, by whatever means, to deceive mankind. To effect this, he produced certain passages from Grotius, Masenius, and others, which had a faint resemblance to some parts of the *Paradise Lost*. In these he interpolated some fragments of Hog's Latin translation of that poem, alleging that the mass thus fabricated was the archetype from which Milton copied. These fabrications he published from time to time in the *Gentleman's Magazine*; and, exulting in his fancied success, he in 1750 ventured them into a pamphlet, entitled *An Essay on Milton's Use and Imitation of the Moderns in his "Paradise Lost."*

To this pamphlet Johnson wrote a Preface, in full persuasion on Lauder's honesty, and a Postscript recommending, in the most persuasive terms, a subscription for the relief of a granddaughter of Milton, of whom he thus speaks:

It is yet in the power of a great people to reward the poet whose name they boast, and from the alliance of whose genius they claim some kind of superiority to every other nation of the earth; that poet, whose works may possibly be read when every other monument of British greatness shall

be obliterated; to reward him, not with pictures or medals, which if he sees he sees with contempt, but with tokens of gratitude, which he, perhaps, may even now consider as not unworthy the regard of an immortal spirit.

Later, in 1773, Dr. Johnson was able to do an old friend a good turn. "In that year," says Boswell, "he did not, so far as is known, furnish any production of his fertile pen to any of his numerous friends or dependents, except the preface of his old amanuensis, MacBean's *Dictionary of Ancient Geography*." And in 1775 he was responsible for one sentence in the introduction to Mickle's once famous translation of the *Lusiads*; also

In the summer he wrote a prologue which was spoken before *A Word to the Wise*, a comedy by Mr. Hugh Kelly, which had been brought upon the stage in 1770; but he being a writer for the Ministry in one of the newspapers, it fell a sacrifice to popular fury, and in the playhouse phrase, was *damned*. By the generosity of Mr. Harris, the proprietor of Covent Garden Theatre, it was now exhibited for one night, for the benefit of the author's widow and children.

We come now to more integral contributions, work by Johnson which was actually embedded in the writings of other people, and passed as theirs. Here Johnson was of assistance to a variety of persons and in a variety of degree, his help ranging from mere deletions to the fabrication of an entire work. I suppose that the most celebrated of his virtuous

forgeries on the wholesale scale are the publications which were imputed to the gifted, unfortunate, and rather oily Dr. William Dodd, the curled darling who published the *Beauties of Shakespeare* (translated into many languages), fascinated London with his pulpit eloquence, and went to the scaffold for forgery. Johnson's heart was moved by this man's collapse and the disproportionate severity of his doom. He did his best to save him from the gallows, and helped him at the last with a series of pamphlets which were intended to support his cause, notably *The Occasional Papers* and *The Convict's Address to his Unhappy Brethren*—a sermon preached in Newgate, 1777. The extent of Dodd's contribution to this, the most highly affecting of his productions, is made clear by a sentence of Boswell's in which he says that Johnson marked for him "such passages as were added by Dodd." Another case in which he was virtually the entire author of another man's book is that of Zachariah Williams's treatise, published in 1755, and entitled *An Account of an Attempt to ascertain the longitude at Sea, by an exact account of the Magnetical Needle*.

Whatever charge may be brought home to Dr. Johnson,—and we who love him will, I am sure, have to be hard pressed before we admit any charge whatever against him—it will hardly be that of a lack of versatility. The scientific aptitude which he always

showed had been earlier illustrated in 1743 when Dr. James published his *Medicinal Dictionary* in three volumes folio. Johnson is alleged to have written some of the articles. "He certainly," says Boswell, "wrote the Dedication to Dr. Mead, which is conceived with great address, to conciliate the patronage of that eminent man." In a much later passage referring to this effort Boswell says: "I have in vain endeavoured to find out what parts Johnson wrote for Dr. James," adding, with some naivety, "perhaps medical men may." In 1767, we are told, he wrote the first two paragraphs of *The Design of Chinese Buildings, Furniture, Dresses, Machines, Utensils, etc.*, by Sir William Chambers, most noted, perhaps, as the perpetrator of the Pagoda in Kew Gardens. The first two sentences—apparently he was regarded as an umpire or starter—of T. Davies's *Memoirs of Garrick*, were also his:

All excellence has a right to be recorded. I shall therefore think it superfluous to apologize for writing the life of a man, who, by an uncommon assemblage of private virtues, adorned the highest eminence in a public profession.

Here, as far as I know (but there are probably swarms of other instances in which Johnson helped these lame dogs over their worst stiles), we come to an end of his known complements to other men's prose. There remain the recorded examples of the assistance he gave to writers of verse.

More than thirty years ago I was staying, in Devonshire, with a great-aunt who, were she living now, would be more than a hundred years old. Observing my propensity for mixed reading, she told me that she had a number of quite old books in a boxroom and that, if I liked, I could have them. I naturally said I liked; I went to the attic; and I took home with me about a hundred books. There was a complete set of the Diamond Classics in a little glass-fronted two-shelved case shaped like a Greek temple—now long fallen in pieces. There was Solomon Gessner's *Death of Abel*, Hervey's *Meditations among the Tombs*, Klopstock's *Messiah*, Baxter's *The Saint's Everlasting Rest*, *Drelincourt on Death* (perhaps the biggest best-seller of the eighteenth century) and various little volumes of verse. But much the most splendid volume to the eye was a tall, wide-margined, red-morocco-bound copy of a work called *Boulter's Monument* by the Rev. Dr. Madden. It was a poem commemorative of the virtues and achievements of Boulter, Archbishop of Armagh, who died in 1742. A dull work, I thought, but it followed me in my wanderings; and some years later I discovered, on perusing Boswell, that Dr. Johnson was a participant in it. Here is what Boswell reports as having been said to him by Dr. Thomas Campbell:

Sitting with Dr. Johnson one morning alone, he asked me if I had known Dr. Madden. . . . He begged of me that when I returned to Ireland,

I would endeavour to procure for him a poem of Dr. Madden's called *Boulter's Monument*. The reason (said he) why I wish for it, is this: when Dr. Madden came to London, he submitted that work to my castigation, and I remember I blotted a great many lines, and might have blotted many more. However the doctor was very thankful, and very generous, for he gave me ten guineas, which was to me at that time a great sum.

The work—although the supply was probably in excess of the demand—was rare at that time. It is rare now: except for the one I possessed, I have never seen or heard of a copy.

A similar work of revision, with the insertion of some lines, (for he illuminated it here and there with a ray of his own genius) seems to have been done by Johnson for the poems, published in collected form, of Mary Masters, a lady of whom Roswell merely ambiguously tells us that she "lived with Mr. Carr," but whose reputation, I believe, subject to correction, to have been unblemished. What Johnson's corrections were is likely to remain as conjectural as the song of the Sirens. I cannot suppose he was responsible for the Dedication, at least. It is addressed to the Earl of Burlington, and Mrs. Masters unites the normal humility of Grub Street with a humility peculiar, at that time, to her sex. Lord Burlington shines in the heavens, she is a mere grub. "Yet," she proceeds,



. . . when a British peer has deign'd to shed  
 His gen'rous favours on my worthless head  
 Silent shall I receive the welcome Boon?

the boon, apparently, being encouragement:

He spoke; he prais'd, I hearken'd with delight  
 And found a strong Propensity to write.

Mrs. Masters was not a bad poet, in spite of this. She had a feeling for nature, which struggled for expression in very stiff couplets. Neither in the best descriptive passages, nor elsewhere, can I detect the hand of Johnson. Some of her neatest lines are lines of self-depreciation. There is a poem headed *To One Who Questioned her being the Author of Some Verses*—a title used by Anne Killigrew two generations before; for men found it difficult, in those days, to believe that a woman could write good poetry; and what they would have said if asked to believe in a woman doctor swimming the Channel, I don't know. The neatest part of it is this:

Search but these strains you think so much excel,  
 Scan ev'ry verse, and try the numbers well:  
 You'll plainly see, in almost ev'ry line  
 Distinguishing defects to prove them mine.

The last line, I suppose, Dr. Johnson may conceivably have corrected, though he could hardly have initiated it; but he cannot be suspected of even that degree of collaboration in the lines in which this most modest poetess depreciates her own personal appearance:

My songs th' attentive nymphs with pleasure  
 hear,  
 Because in me no rival charms they fear.  
 My shape erroneous and my stature low  
 Can to the eye no dang'rous beauty show.

Boswell says elsewhere:

He furnished the preface, and several of the pieces, which compose a volume of *Miscellanies* by Mrs. Anna Williams, the blind lady who had an asylum in his house. Of these, there are his *Epitaph on Philips*; *Translation of a Latin Epitaph on Sir Thomas Hammer*; *Friendship, an Ode*; and *The Ant*, a paraphrase from the Proverbs, of which I have a copy in his own hand-writing; and, from internal evidence, I ascribe to him, *To Miss—on her giving the author a gold and silk network purse of her own weaving*; and *The Happy Life*. Most of the pieces of this volume have evidently received additions from his superior pen, particularly *Verses to Mr. Richardson on his Sir Charles Grandison*; *The Excursion*; *Reflections on a Grave digging in Westminster Abbey*. There is in this collection a poem, *On the death of Stephen Grey, the Electrician*; which on reading it appeared to me to be undoubtedly Johnson's. I asked Mrs. Williams whether it was not his. "Sir," said she with some warmth, "I wrote that poem before I had the honour of Dr. Johnson's acquaintance." I, however, was so much impressed with my first notion, that I mentioned it to Johnson, repeating at the same time what Mrs. Williams said. His answer was, "It is true, sir, that she wrote it before she was acquainted with me; but she has

not told you that I wrote it all over again, except two lines." *The Fountains*, a beautiful little fairy tale in prose, written with exquisite simplicity, is one of Johnson's productions; and I cannot withhold from Mrs. Thrale the praise of being the author of that admirable poem, *The Three Warnings*.

We come next to two instances in which Johnson collaborated importantly in two very fine poems, gilding refined gold and painting the lily. I refer, of course, to his emendations of Goldsmith's *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village*. Mr. R. B. Adam of Buffalo possesses copies of these works annotated by Boswell himself. In the 5th edition of *The Traveller* (1770?) Boswell writes:

In Spring 1793, Dr. Johnson at my desire, marked with a pencil the lines in this admirable poem, which he furnished: viz. 1. 18 on p. 23 and from the 3rd line on the last page to the end except the last couplet but one. These (he said) are all of which I can be sure.

In the first edition (1770) of the *Deserted Village* Boswell wrote:

The four last lines were marked at my desire by Dr. Johnson, Spring 1783, as all he wrote of this admirable Poem.

These notes square with the accounts in the *Life*. These are as follows:

He said of Goldsmith's *Traveller*, which had been published in my absence, "There has not been so fine a poem since Pope's time."

And here it is proper to settle, with authentic precision, what has long floated in public report, as to Johnson's being himself the author of a considerable part of that poem. Much, no doubt, both of the sentiments and expression, were derived from conversation with him; and it was certainly submitted to his friendly revision; but in the year 1783, he, at my request, marked with a pencil the lines which he had furnished, which are only line 420th,

To stop too fearful, and too faint to go; (a bad line) and the concluding ten lines, except for the last couplet but one, which I distinguished by the italic character:

How small of all that human hearts endure,  
That part which kings or laws can cause or  
cure.

Still to ourselves in every place consigned,  
Our own felicity we make or find;  
With secret course, which no loud storms  
annoy,

Glides the smooth current of domestic joy:

*The lifted axe, the agonizing wheel,*

*Luke's iron crown, and Damien's bed of steel,*

To men remote from power, but rarely  
known,

Leave reason, faith and conscience all our  
own.

He added, "These are all of which I can be sure." They bear a small proportion to the whole, which consists of four hundred and thirty-eight verses.

Dr. Johnson at the same time favoured me by marking the lines which he furnished to Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*, which are only the last four:

That trade's proud empires haste to swift  
decay  
As ocean sweeps the laboured mole away:  
While self-dependent power can time defy,  
As rocks resist the billows and the sky.

But his last service to English poetry was performed long after Goldsmith's death and when he was near his own. There were persons still living when most of us were born who remembered the last, and not the least eminent, of the poets whom Johnson assisted. He was an old man of 74, with his triumphs long behind him when there came to him for advice a young clergyman who was to carry Johnson's couplets, his own tradition of strong sense and honest observation, right on through the new Romantic generation. It was George Crabbe who brought to him *The Village*. "Its sentiments," says Boswell, "as to the false notions of rustic happiness and rustic virtue" (for Crabbe was a country parson in very bad times) "were quite congenial with his own; and he had taken the trouble not only to suggest slight corrections and variations, but to furnish some lines, when he thought he could give the writer's meaning better than in the words of the manuscript." Boswell gives an instance. Crabbe had written:

In fairer scenes, where peaceful pleasures spring,  
 Tityrus, pride of Mantuan swains, might sing;  
 But charmed by him, or smitten with his views,  
 Shall modern poets court the Mantuan muse?  
 From Truth and Nature shall we widely stray,  
 Where Fancy leads, or Virgil led the way?

This, leaving but one line, Johnson altered to

On Mincio's banks, in Cæsar's bounteous reign,  
 If Tityrus found the golden age again,  
 Must sleepy bards the flattering dream prolong,  
 Mechanick echoes of the Mantuan song?  
 From Truth and Nature shall we widely stray,  
 When Virgil, not when Fancy, leads the way?

There is the old resonant ring there, the old clarity of reasoning, the old "guts"; and it is pleasant to think that, touching hands with Crabbe as he had once touched hands with Pope, the old man, who, in retrospect, bestraddles our eighteenth century like a colossus, linked the age of Anne, now so remote, with that of Victoria, still so near us.

## ELIZABETHAN SONG

WHEN I began to bring together what I thought the best of the Elizabethan songs, I was at once faced with the question "What is a song?" I soon decided that my life at least would be too short for the framing of a satisfactory definition. We think we know a song when we see one, but there must be, and are, borderland cases. An extreme instance is Campion's poem beginning:

When thou must home to shades of underground,  
And there arrived, a new admired guest,  
The beauteous spirits do engirt thee round,  
White Iope, blithe Helen, and the rest. . . .

When we first read that it certainly does not appear to us to be a song. Yet Rossiter set it to music with the author's assent, and published it as a song. As an Elizabethan song we must therefore regard it. I regarded as available for my choice all Elizabethan poems which were published with music, as well as all poems, described by their authors as songs, and all other poems akin to these.

Under the last analysis the main subjects of all poetry are seen to be few, commonplace and enduring;

for the main elements in our lives and surroundings, which make the most frequent and the deepest appeal to our emotions, do not change. But it will be found that the subjects of Elizabethan songs are restricted in a more special sense; that many of the songs have been deliberately written as variations on agreed themes; and that the subsidiary objects mentioned tend, as one reads on, to become familiar. The camp one scarcely ever enters; there is an occasional visit to the tavern; there are broadly comic songs, a lusty smith's song. But most frequently we are either with shepherds and shepherdesses in a pastoral landscape or with a lutanist and his lady in a Tudor hall or garden. The poet either sings directly to his lute, or through the Arcadian convention in terms of Corydon and Phillis, the earlier Strephon and Chloe. Either way subjects and sentiments tend to run in grooves. The lover, courtly or rustic, sings his lady's praise; her beauties and virtues, dwelt on one by one, are incomparable; Venus is jealous of her, and Cupid disarmed by her. Or he laments her cruelty; or he asks, entreats, implores her to relent; or he comforts himself for the loss of her; or it is the shepherdess who is forlorn or the shepherd unkind. To the lute, Love, strange malady, delightful pain, accursed infliction, is dissected, adored or denounced; to the lute and pipe the passage of youth and pleasure is sung, more often as an incitement to the gathering



of rosebuds in their brief season than as a consolation to despair. And above all these poets are singers of spring, spring in the world and in the heart. Pure joy is rare in poetry, but it is here in a hundred lively songs of spring birds and spring flowers, spring mornings, spring love and spring nuptials. Dominant over all the griefs, real or assumed, the reproaches and scorns, the mementoes of death and the maledictions on Love, is this air of gaiety, this morning freshness, whether genuine of the English country or imputed to an imaginary Utopia where the flocks feed in the sun and Tityrus pipes to Amaryllis in the shade, the rejoicing spirit that breaks out in those lines which Herrick alone of later men could have written, where the girl calls of the sun:

In at our window peeping;  
     Lo, how he blusheth to espy  
 Us idle wenches sleeping.

As a rule certain qualities of observation, thought and feeling are, at their most intense, absent from these songs. That they should not be markedly descriptive or meditative is not a peculiarity; that is inherent in the nature of song. The manner of song is to be simple in its statements and comparisons, to express the peaks rather than the foundations, the results rather than the processes of thought and emotion. Analysis is not its business and it does not keep its eye too attentively on the object. Burns

could paint genre in detail; but, singing, his manner is the right manner of:

O my love is like the red, red rose  
That's newly sprung in June. . . .

No poet has described the sea and the shore with more discriminating accuracy, more fullness of detail, than Tennyson; but in song he can go no farther with epithet than:

Break, break, break,  
On thy cold grey stones, O sea. . . .

and the "happy autumn fields" of the other song would have been described with far greater elaboration had they occurred, as background or as simile, in the *Idylls of the King*. The Elizabethan songs are full of nature, but it is nature simplified and generalized. That, and a similar brevity of reflection, is natural; though some men, such as Shakespeare, can go farther, whilst still singing, than others. But the whole range of emotion, granted suitable expression, is open to song: we find that the Elizabethan songs do not as a rule express great depth and ardour of feeling. This might prove true also of any great gathering of song; it may be that always and everywhere it springs most often from light-heartedness. It is certainly so with the Elizabethans. There are many songs of grief, and they are exquisitely done; but the grief does not usually give us a pang; we are just touched as we are

meant to be, and as the singer was; the tinge of artifice is general. When a deeper depth than normal is sounded, and a Catullan sincerity comes in, we are at once struck by it: the man, we know at once, really feels and means what he says; he is not delightfully pretending; he writes from a stir of genuine emotion. That unmistakable note of earnestness sounds, though soberly, in Daniel's

When your eyes have done their part,  
Thought must length it in the heart.

There is reality in the song from Dowland:

Dear, if you change, I'll never choose again. . . .  
Fair, if you fail, I'll judge all beauty vain.

And in the anonymous *One did I love*:

Let him not vaunt that gains my loss,  
For when that he and time hath proved her,  
She may bring him to Weeping-Cross;  
I say no more, because I loved her.

And poignantly in Campion's ending:

'Tis now flowery May;  
But even in cold December,  
When all these leaves are blown away,  
This place shall I remember.

Sidney, who said, "Look in thy heart and write," always has an uncommon air of reality in his songs as in his sonnets. His catalogue of his lady's beauties, similar in progress, is far more fervent and convincing

than those of Lodge and all the others who so prettily register the golden hairs, the damask cheeks and the ivory breasts. His serenade, which always reminds me of Brahms's, has a concreteness and sincerity unsought by many poets whose shepherds sang charmingly under their shepherdesses' windows:

That you heard was but a mouse,  
 Dumb sleep holdeth all the house:  
     Yet asleep methinks they say,  
     Young folks, take time, while you may.  
 Take me to thee and thee to me.  
 No, no, no, no, my dear, let be.

The reader's heart stands still and flutters again; the very "no, no, no," almost a poetical counter or cliché of the time, takes a new accent here, less like Rosalind's and more like Juliet's. Most of the singers are at a remove from life, especially when they are not avowedly gay. The lover may say he is heart-broken but he says it neatly and with a carefully melodious sigh; the vanity of the world may be denounced, but not in the tones of Wordsworth, much less in those of Timon; the passage of life is lamented, but dust rather than corruption is the chosen image for its decay; the might of the leveller Death is proclaimed, but he is not invested with his horrors. Life was what it is: the manner of the song-writers had no close contact with it. In song the fierce and turbulent genius of Faustus's creator, who died in a tavern brawl, gave us *Come live with me and be my love*, and the squalors

and miseries of Robert Greene, which we know from his prose, find no reflection in the perfect Arcadianism of *Fair Samela*, whiter than the flocks by Arethusa's fount.

The Elizabethans rejoiced in bird-song, and took a pretty pleasure in filling their verses with syllables, tirra-lirra, jug-jug, pee-wit, suggesting the diversity of notes, the tunes of lark and thrush, nightingale and boding owl. Their own songs were as various; the nineteenth century itself, with all its conscious and proclaimed experimentalism, was not more prolific of metrical and rhythmical invention. English poetry had from the earliest ages been marked by a great range of music. Wever's lovely

In a harbour grene aslepe whereas I lay  
The byrdes sang sweet in the middes of the  
day. . . .

has a reminiscence of the early mediæval metre, of Langland's

In the summer season when sweet was the  
sun. . . .

and the lyrical range of middle English religious verse is only just beginning to be realized. Our native genius lay that way. Under the influence of Ben Jonson and Donne—themselves, on occasion, cunning manipulators of trochaic and wavering rhythms and bold devisers of new forms—a tendency to resort

more exclusively to iambics set in, though everywhere, in imagery, shape of stanza, adventurousness of thought and expression, liberty ran into licence. The reaction in favour of lucidity, sense and correctness was accompanied by a further constriction of prosodic practice. Not only were the iambics prevalent in the days of Anne and the Georges, but verse forms, in general, were reduced to a very few. The couplet of pentameters or tetrameters (one must use the terms for convenience), the elegiac quatrain, the quatrain or octette in "common measure" sufficed for almost every poet. The lingering Elizabethanisms in Dryden's songs are like the last rays of a sunset. When, in Anne's day, we come across such tripping tunes as that of Walsh's

Distracted with care  
For Phillis the fair

or Lord Peterborough's

I said to my heart between sleeping and waking  
we have (though we may appreciate the Augustans for what they were) the sensations of seeing a trout in a goldfish pond, and later, Blake's *Songs of Innocence* were, as much in sound as in sense, a throw-back as well as a throw-forward from that age of regularity and sophistication. The "Romantic Movement," whatever its defects and excesses, did at least release our natural passion for free songs, which had

been confined in a strait-waistcoat. The passion and the gift have never been more freely exhibited than by the song-writers of Elizabeth's time, which virtually means every poet of her time, including those whose first aim was narrative or dramatic. I cannot but quote a few examples from this multitudinous choir. There is Alexander Montgomerie's

Hey! now the day dawis;  
The jolly cock crawis;  
Now shrouded the shawis  
Thro' Nature anon

an anticipation of Wordsworth's stanzas where the cattle feed forty as one. Nicholas Breton, sweet and tender and lovable in all his works, gives us a new melody in every song. Nothing in English is more delicious than the joyous, breathless rush of his *Astrophel's Song*, so strangely neglected by anthologists:

Fair in a morn (O fairest morn!)  
Was never morn so fair,  
There shone a sun, tho' not the sun  
That shineth in the air.  
For the earth and from the earth,  
(Was never such a creature!)  
Did come this face (was never face  
That carried such a feature).  
Upon a hill (O blessed hill,  
Was never hill so blessed!)  
There stood a man (was never man  
For woman so distressed).

The sedate Spenser himself broke into something similar in *Perigot and Cuddy's Roundelay*:

It fell upon a holy-eve,  
 (Heigho, holy-day!)  
 When holy fathers wont to shrive  
 (Now ginneth this roundelay),  
 Sitting upon a hill so high,  
 (Heigho, the high hill !)  
 The while my flock did feed thereby,  
 And while the shepherd's self did spell. . . .

Sir Philip Sidney is as various as any. His music is very personal to himself; there is something hushed and mysterious in it, and an elaborate art; it has a quality in common with Walter de la Mare's. The atmosphere of all the serenades and starlit balconies is summed up at once by his:

Who is it that this dark night  
 Underneath my window plaineth?

He experimented as became a poetical theorist. One of his poems is in Alexandrines; another, *Doubt you to whom*, is written in the Omar Khayyám stanza with an extra syllable to the three rhyming lines which gives them a "dying fall." A whole school of moderns is anticipated and excelled in Greene's *Venus to Adonis*:

Sweet Adon, darest not glance thine eye,  
 N'oserez-vous, mon bel ami?  
 Upon thy Venus that must die  
 Je vous en prie, pity me.  
 N'oserez-vous, mon bel, mon bel,  
 N'oserez-vous, mon bel ami?



The sound here is the very voice of enticing supplication. "Jolly" is the only word for the tune of Wootton's

Jolly Shepherd, shepherd on a hill,  
On a hill so merrily  
On a hill so cherrily. . . .

and jollity and every other mood is reflected in the tripping and tramping, laughing and sighing measures of the hosts of songs in the music books. How could song begin more sweetly than with:

Corydon, arise my Corydon!  
Titan shineth clear.  
Who is that calleth Corydon?  
Who is it I hear?

That is the speaking voice.

A shepherd in the shade his plaining made  
Of love and lovers wrong.  
Unto the fairest lass that trod on grass  
And thus began his song.

Here, I think, we may detect the influence of the sister-art. Poet and musician in that age reacted on one another; where words are set to music we sometimes feel that the poet's melody suggested the musician's, and sometimes that the musician suggested developments of rhythm to the poet. In Campion, who was both poet and composer, this is especially noticeable. He was of those whose interest in technical discovery, like Sidney's, is evident; not one of the spontaneous and care-free singers; he

carefully considered every sound for its speed and weight and neighbourhood. Sometimes I think music and words were born together in him; sometimes I believe (though one can scarcely demonstrate this) he conceived a tune for instrument and singing voice and fitted words to it with strange and charming results to his poetry.

I cannot conclude without a word on the songs of Shakespeare. His magnitude, his marvellous power and ease, show here as elsewhere. Our greatest tragedian was our greatest comedian, our greatest dramatist was our greatest song-writer. Variety of music is at its height in him; the new form comes inevitably to fit the new theme. The cadences of his laments, the caressing notes of his invitations, the lilt of his merry-makings, are equally beautiful, and his mark is on the slightest trifle that he carelessly "warbled" in any stock contemporary fashion:

It was a lover and his lass,  
 With a hey and a ho and a hey nonino,  
 That o'er the green cornfield did pass,  
 In the spring time, the only pretty ring time,  
 When birds do sing, hey ding a ding ding,  
 Sweet lovers love the spring.

He does the utmost that can be done with the song. Elaborate epithet is not possible, but he can throw off "Plumpy Bacchus with bright eyne." Sense, in a song, must not so attest the attention as to impede the movement, but Shakespeare approaches auda-

ciously, without crossing, the frontier beyond which description would kill singing quality, in the last stanza of *When Daisies pied*:

When all around the wind doth blow,  
 And coughing drowns the parson's saw,  
 And birds sit brooding in the snow,  
 And Marian's nose looks red and raw,  
 When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl,  
 Then nightly sings the staring owl,  
 To-whit;  
 To-who, a merry note,  
 While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

The themes of his songs are often the themes that a hundred others treated: happy and unhappy lovers, the transience of youth, the peace of death, the vanity of the world, spring and the lark at dawn. But he surpassed them all without effort in songs inevitable, final. A hundred others in substance, but none in perfect achievement, came near:

Take, O take those lips away  
 That so sweetly were forsworn  
 And those eyes the break of day. . . .

or:

Hark, hark, the lark at heaven's gate sings  
 And Phoebus 'gins arise. . . .

and the classic summary of all the requiems is:

Fear no more the heat o' the sun  
 Nor the furious winter's rages;  
 Thou thy worldly task hast done,  
 Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages.

Reading these we cease to inquire, and we cannot discover, how far a genuine personal passion is to be detected in them. Art carries them beyond the personal; the most perfect speech is at the instant service of universal experience; the emotions of all humanity are voiced; the songs even quintessential of their subjects, take various colourings from the eye that reads them:

Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty,  
Youth's a stuff will not endure.

He is saying, with a vast yet ineluctable difference, what all his contemporaries had said; yet the words serve the purposes of many moods; at times they are as light as thistledown, at times plangent with sorrow. Equally "commonplace" in theme:

Blow, blow, thou winter wind,  
Thou art not so unkind  
As man's ingratitude. . . .

may seem, according to our mood, the expression of a transient sigh from a disillusionment about to be dismissed, or the fruit of a lasting bitterness. His songs, like his speeches, have the proverbial quality; all the songs of seclusion are contained in the phrase:

Here shall he see  
No enemy  
But winter and rough weather.

His witches' songs excel the other witches' songs, his fairy songs (one of which foreshadows much of the

*Faithful Shepherdess* and *Comus*) excel the other fairy songs. And there are songs in which he reminds us of no one but himself, in which there is a magic, born like Iris of sun and rain, which conveys far more than is said. How much of life smiles and sighs in:

When that I was a little tiny boy,  
 With hey ho, the wind and the rain,  
 A foolish thing was but a toy,  
 For the rain it raineth every day!

It is meaningless but how pregnant; how vague yet crowded the sentence with which he dismisses us at the end, "But that's all one, our play is done," leaving us still pondering at his wisdom and sensitiveness, his tears and his laughter, his speech and his silences!

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THE critic who attempts to write an essay on Jane Austen does not, at least, find his work complicated by the intrusion of biography. Miss Austen was a contemporary of the great English romantics, whose lives were mostly as adventurous as their works, and whose lives and works acted and reacted upon each other. An introduction to the works of Lord Byron will inevitably be largely devoted to his ancestry and school friendships, his beauty and his lameness, his travels, his loves, his calamitous marriage, his politics and his dramatic death, his egoism, generosity, wit and personal habits. Coleridge cannot be discussed without mention of his literary friendships, his experiences in the cavalry and the Unitarian ministry, his lectures and his opium; while those who take Shelley as their subject frequently find space to say no more about his poems than that, at certain dates, he wrote them. Even criticisms of the more sober and central Walter Scott have a tendency to be devoured by descriptions of the fame of the anonymous novels, the struggle to preserve their anonymity, and the later, and more heroic, struggle against a vast burden of debt. All that we need know,

and almost all that we can know, of Jane Austen lies within the covers of her few novels. "L.E.L." was the feminine counterpart of the Byrons: Miss Austen was the heiress of Fanny Burney, of Richardson and of Crabbe, whom she jokingly pretended she was going to marry. She was the quiet sunset of the great day of eighteenth-century prose, and had no more kinship with the really volcanic spirits who scattered fire and ashes over her historical epoch than she had with the pseudo-volcanoes who preceded them, the Lewises and Radcliffes whose false paroxysms and artificial nightmares she burlesqued in *Northanger Abbey*. She had no acquaintance with the famous; and nothing ever happened to her except birth, death, and the normal series of incidents which might be expected to happen to a placid spinster lady of the upper middle class who spent almost all her days in the country.

Jane Austen was born on December 16th, 1775, at Steventon Rectory, Hampshire, the youngest of the seven children of the Rev. George Austen. In 1801 the family moved to Bath; in 1805 Mr. Austen died there. The sons by this time had left home, two of them (who became admirals) being in the Navy. Miss Austen, her sister Cassandra, and her mother moved to Southampton, and then to Chawton, Hants. Jane died on July 18th, 1817, at Winchester, in her forty-second year. She paid several visits to

London, and enjoyed the theatres; she was once shown over the Library at Carlton House by the Prince Regent's Librarian, the Royal Adonis himself sharing with Scott, Archbishop Whateley and Sydney Smith (none of whom she knew) the honour of being among her early admirers. At rare intervals the sailor brothers appeared; there were decorous gaieties at Bath; for the rest, the normal occupations of the country—sewing and housekeeping, calls, tea-parties, dinner parties, and sometimes a dance which might even be glorified by the presence of officers from a neighbouring regiment. None of the great worlds did she penetrate. It is said that as a girl she was in love with a man who died young; but even that seems hardly certain, though she knew love well enough and exhibited a reverence towards it which gives a touch of tenderness and gravity to even her lightest books.

The spinster daughter of a country clergyman, leading the life of ten thousand such! The conception has often produced exclamations of astonishment that such polished writing, such wit, such wisdom should proceed from so commonplace a source; that so signal a genius should have been satisfied with the humdrum occupations and rustic company which apparently gave Miss Austen all she asked of life; that she should even have written these sophisticated masterpieces in a common drawing-room with the family walking



in and out and amusing themselves by listening for the little laughs which Sister Jane or Aunt Jane gave when she had hit on a happy stroke; that she should have wished for no other audience for her latest manuscript compositions than her entirely ordinary relatives. The surprise is based on a misconception; it denotes a very wrong idea about the cultural map of England, a presumption that both education and intelligence are all concentrated in certain narrow metropolitan circles, some aristocratic and some (to use a term now becoming extinct) Bohemian. It is very erroneous to suppose that, amongst women, wide reading, wit and shrewdness about life and character are confined to veteran countesses who know all the elder statesmen and littérateurs, and confident blue-stockings (if the colour be conceivable in artificial silk and with such an expanse showing) who are on familiar terms with all their male competitors. Half the most perceptive readers in England have little connection with London and have never met an author: many of them are women, and many of those are spinsters. Jane Austen, in one sense, was out of contact with her age: she was unaffected by the great revolutionary currents of thought and enthusiasm which swept through almost all the geniuses of her time. In another sense she is in contact with all the ages: far from being a sport of nature she was really an abiding type. We may be sure that something not unlike her

was known to the Paston family when the Wars of the Roses were being waged: we find a strong affinity with her in Dorothy Osborne. The species has probably multiplied greatly with time, conditions for its development having been made more favourable: it is certainly common today. In Jane Austen the powers of observation, of criticism, of expression, of the type were present in a unique degree: it is in degree not in kind that she differs from a multitude of others who may today be encountered wherever there is a group of lesser gentlefolk, and who observe their dense surroundings with the same old causticity and amusement where pretentious stupidity is to be seen and the same old tolerance for pure, kindly and simple natures. Jane Austen today would live much the same life as she led a century and more ago. A little more diversity would be introduced into her existence. She would have something to do with Girl Guides and Women's Institutes, and her vigilant eye would glean from committee meetings and entertainments material with which she would very much amuse, and slightly shock, the family at home. She might occasionally be persuaded, less frequently as time went on, to play a game of mild tennis: now and then she would be seen shopping in Alton or in Petersfield or in Alresford, or (on special days) in Winchester in her Austin—I am tempted to say Austen-Seven. The range of visiting would be slightly extended.

Mrs. Bennet was proud that her family dined with "six-and-twenty families": a small car enlarges the range. Her characters would certainly, in our time, be more diversified. There would be specimens of the new and vulgar rich for her; she would be unable completely to ignore the poor; visitors from London and the world outside would be more frequent and their communications more easy to understand and appreciate in view of the growth of the periodical press, not to mention the wireless.

Yet there is no reason to suppose that, born now, and in similar circumstances, she would lead a life very much different from that which she did live, even if an occasional excursion to Switzerland replaced the trips to Bath. For here her kindred are all around us: a minority but not really scarce. You could not dine out in any country neighbourhood for a fortnight without meeting one of them. They have ordinary good looks and are quiet, but a light in the eye and an occasional twitch of the mouth gives them away. They are daughters of squires or parsons, or wives of service-men, whose husbands may not quite read the books they read but have something attractive or original about them, a turn of humour, or a knack of water-colour, or an interest in the Napoleonic campaigns, or the habits of birds. If they are spinsters or widows, their surroundings reflect their tastes. They tend to live in or near the cathedral cities or the older

kind of country towns; preferably in the sort of house that seemed most pleasant and convenient to Jane Austen herself: a brick house of the eighteenth century with a neat garden, adorned (so far as means allow) with prints and old silver, mahogany and china—and books. For by such people are books largely bought; and when they are bought they are read, and not merely glanced at or laid, in “mint condition,” on an occasional table for a month or two pending supersession by something newer which has replaced them in the gabble of luncheon tables. The English Lady is something different from the English Grand Dame or the English cultured fashionable, though the types frequently coincide. Jane Austen was the English Lady at her apex; a perfect specimen who spoke for her whole intelligent class—and with not too much mercy for the rest. She had unusual qualities. The type is usually diffident, not quite confident enough about its own strength, inclined to be abashed in the presence of fame, however meretricious, and authority, however undeserved; prone to think that its unerring judgment in matters of moral and æsthetic taste is really uncertain, amateurish and subject to professional correction. Jane Austen, rather less humble and sensitive, rather more determined, rather less catholic in her interests, rather less subject to the spell of male authority than most of her kind, was nevertheless one of a tribe and its

spokesman. Had she never written, a recurrent and very valuable English type would not have been adequately represented in English literature. Emma and Elizabeth had to be drawn by their congener.

She was, as such women often are, very precocious. Fragments have been published in recent years which show her to have been preternaturally observant, discriminating, witty and ingenious when still in the schoolroom—though her spelling was subject to the ordinary processes of orthographical growth. The first and most popular of her major works, *Pride and Prejudice* (originally called *First Impressions*) was written in 1796, when she was twenty-one; though it was not until 1813 that, in a revised form, it was published. The first actually to be published was *Sense and Sensibility*, which appeared, with the description "By a Lady," in 1811, having been written fourteen years previously. At twenty-two Miss Austen made a beginning with *Northanger Abbey*; *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, and *Persuasion*, her maturest works, were written in 1812-13, 1814-15, and 1815-16 respectively. *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* appeared posthumously in 1818; the unfinished *Lady Susan* and *The Watsons* were in manuscript for another sixty years and more; the engaging fragment *Sanditon* appeared for the first time a few years ago. Most of Miss Austen's works, in fact, experienced great delay between writing and printing. *Pride and Prejudice*

was rejected by the publisher Cadell sixteen years before it was ultimately published. *Northanger Abbey*, in its first form, was actually sold in 1803, then stowed away in a drawer, and reclaimed after another thirteen years, still in manuscript. People often speculate about what Miss Austen would have done had she lived to seventy-one instead of forty-one, so steadily did her outlook widen and her mastery over character develop. They might equally well wonder as to what difference would have been made had those early, almost unbelievably early, works been published when they were first submitted to the trade. She had no prodigious lust for fame and allowed eight or nine years to pass without a serious effort at composition until the appearance and success of *Sense and Sensibility* encouraged her to make a start with *Mansfield Park*. This density on the part of the publishers (combined perhaps with lack of enterprise on her own and her father's part) may well have robbed us of half a dozen masterpieces.

However, we should be grateful for what we have: there is as much pleasure in reading a familiar Austen novel over again as there would be in reading a new one: so far as she goes she is perfection. One of the reasons is that she wrote of what she knew, and only of what she knew. She might have done as thousands of women (and men) of her own time and ours have done: invented something more exciting than the

world she knew. But she had little in common either with the great or with the little Romantics: she did not dream or yearn: she was equally immune against the imaginary charms of crusaders, of corsairs and of sheikhs. Without going as far afield as that, she might, in her rural retreat, have imagined scenes of social gaiety or political conflict: but her world was enough for her and so was truth. And in so limiting herself she really ranged the farther: her types exist not only in her own place and time but in every place and time. There have been Mr. Bennets in world politics (Lord Melbourne in his later years was not far from it, to mention no more recent example) and all her heroes and all her fools are world-wide in their distribution. Probably she was aware of this, and had no illusions about spheres nominally beyond her ken. "Coelum, non animam, mutant" is as valid socially as geographically: Miss Austen preferred to study her types in surroundings familiar to her, where she could be as certain with her incidental details of background as she was with her psychological analysis. She also was acutely aware of her own temperamental bias in favour of humorous interpretation. She was not usually in the way of either sending or receiving remarkable letters: but she did receive one such and suitably responded. The Prince Regent's Librarian became chaplain and secretary to Prince Leopold of Cobourg, and in 1816 wrote to suggest that she

should write an "historical romance, illustrative of the history of the august House of Cobourg," and dedicate it to the Prince. She replied:

You are very, very kind in your hints as to the sort of composition which might recommend me at present, and I am fully sensible that an historical romance, founded on the House of Saxe-Cobourg, might be much more to the purpose of profit or popularity than such pictures of domestic life in country villages as I deal in. But I could no more write a romance than an epic poem. I could not sit seriously down to write a serious romance under any other motive than to save my life; and if it were indispensable for me to keep it up, and never relax into laughing at myself or at other people, I am sure I should be hung before I had finished the first chapter. No, I must keep my own style and go on in my own way, and though I may never succeed again in that, I am convinced that I should totally fail in any other.

Even from her pictures of "Domestic life in country villages" there were noticeable omissions. Frequent comment has been made on her absence of allusions to the poor, and even to servants. She must have had close relations with servants all her life, and it is not conceivable that she can have avoided an intimate contact with the poor at Steventon and Chawton. The observation has also been made that, writing all through the period from the Nile to Waterloo, when the world rang with the clash of arms, and every kind



of political disturbance occurred at home, her glance goes no farther than the parish and the neighbouring parishes. The obvious answer is that she was perfectly aware of what she was omitting and omitted it deliberately (or, if the term be preferred, instinctively) because the sort of books that she wished to write would have been destroyed had she allowed her gaze to stray downward to the poor or outward to the conflicts. Imagine, for a moment, that Emma had been allowed to begin district visiting and to listen to the stories of hardship that must have come from the poor peasantry in that era of man-traps, transportation, high prices, and low feeding. What would have resulted? Something, clearly (though it would have been more sensible and less extravagant), like Godwin's *Caleb Williams*; and Jane Austen had no desire to write such a book, and was conscious of no qualifications for the task. She was a realist who wanted to write sentimental comedies: realism, carried beyond certain frontiers would have frustrated the comedy: her characters had to have money, or at worst to be poor relations, in order that they might freely exhibit their idiosyncrasies: how could the squalors of the gallows or the frozen marshes at Austerlitz be admitted into consideration? She rules out some things she knew directly and everything that she did not know directly. Nothing is more symptomatic than her placing of her characters. It is often observed that

she omits to notice the village publicans, blacksmiths, bakers and husbandmen; it is less frequently observed that she takes no notice of dukes or even of the humbler sorts of peers. I may be mistaken, but I think there is no peer at all in the canonical novels. The peers, still bedecked with stars and garters in life and hatchments in death, were beyond her ken: so she left them out. At the top of her social pyramid was a baronet or an untitled large landowner: a Sir Thomas, a Darcy, a Bingley, a Knightley, a Sir Walter. Basking in the direct, or the reflected, rays of these luminaries were the other types she so intimately knew and found adequate for the conveyance of her picture of general human nature. There were the lesser country gentry, the people with a cosy competence, a decent house, and five or twenty acres of land—the people so charmingly condescended to in the novels of Miss Emily Eden, a spiritual sister and disciple of Jane Austen's but of a higher social rank. There were the clergy—young, educated and earnest; or old, benevolent and stupid; or vulgar and toadyish. There were the vagrant young soldiers and sailors drawn from the homes of all these, drifting into the picture and drifting away; the fascinating young scapegraces with good connections; in the far background a successful London alderman who had a dubious connection with commerce. These, and their wives, and their numerous daughters, were the people

with whom Miss Austen drank tea and gossiped: without digging too deep into their real sorrows (and they had fewer than most people), she could exhibit their characters with very slender plots and through very ordinary incidents, and she need never for an instant tread on ground which was not quite familiar and secure beneath her feet. Nobody ever blames Congreve for his omissions: he is so patently artificial. Why should this other and much more lovable comic writer be rebuked simply because she found it artistically convenient to tell some of the truth she knew, and not all the truth?

Her range of subject was her own business: at any rate nobody can complain about her treatment of it. It is to her credit that, in the cruder sense, she is utterly undramatic. Her tone precluded passion, including religious passion: her ironic record of everyday fact would have blended badly with "sensational" and thrilling happenings, whether convincingly imagined or cold-bloodedly manufactured. The daily life of leisured comfortable people, and particularly its humorous side, was her concern: the squire's son does not often murder the retired admiral's daughter, nor do any save very exceptional baronets steal pearls: while even those shocking events, sudden deaths and accidents, discoveries of unfaithfulness, which are apt to shatter the peace of even the most sheltered community, would have spoilt her texture

by unveiling depths of feeling which she did not desire to sound and which could not be treated either ironically or with mild sympathy. Even her elopements occur "off stage." Dramatic power, nevertheless, she had and in a very high degree: it was merely that she could secure dramatic development and dramatic effects with the tiniest surprises. In *Persuasion* Louisa falls off the Cobb (an old stone pier) at Lyme Regis. It is the most violent event in the novels, and stands out so boldly that it has become famous and a tablet has actually been erected on the historic spot. Had *Persuasion* been full of crimes and fights, who would have remembered Louisa's fall? Yet, with one tedious interval, it is a book dramatic in the truest sense: the attention of the reader is held, he awaits each new entrance with delight, he always wants to know what is going to happen next. And something always does happen. Jane Austen, though her descriptive touches are masterly, never wastes time on superfluous descriptions, she shows us character in action instead of telling us about character, she wastes no time over what she calls "solemn specious nonsense, about something unconnected with the story." She is perfectly aware of the nature of her task and the technique of narrative. She holds us from the start with her bright and tidy introductions, introduces us at once to a circle of people talking in a manner that amuses us, makes all her characters

play their parts in her plots, and is unerring in her "curtains." The surprise and suspense that another writer will get with a sudden pistol-shot or terrible discovered secret she can secure by the cunning manipulation of a lovers' tiff or by the arrival of a strange young man with a party of callers on a sunny afternoon. She needs not the thunder of the chariots of doom: the grinding of carriage wheels on a drive is enough for her, and she can communicate excitement about the preparations for private theatricals or a garrison dance.

How could anyone begin an Austen novel without going on?

About thirty years ago, Miss Maria Ward, of Huntingdon, with only seven thousand pounds, had the good luck to captivate Sir Thomas Bertam of Mansfield Park, in the county of Northampton, and to be thereby raised to the rank of a baronet's lady, with all the comforts and consequences of a handsome house and a large income. All Huntingdon exclaimed at the greatness of the match, and her uncle, the lawyer, himself, allowed her to be at least three thousand pounds short of any equitable claim to it. She had two sisters to be benefited by her elevation, and such of their acquaintance as thought Miss Ward and Miss Frances quite as handsome as Miss Maria, did not scruple to predict their marrying with almost equal advantage. But there certainly are not so many men of large fortune in the world, as there are pretty women to deserve them. Miss Ward,

at the end of half a dozen years, found herself obliged to be attached to the Rev. Mr. Norris, a friend of her brother-in-law, with scarcely any private fortune, and Miss Frances fared yet worse.

"Obliged to be attached." Solemn persons have been known to criticize Miss Austen for too complacently accepting the standards of her time and society about rank and money. It is a misfortune to have no ear for irony. This very book ends with Sir Thomas gladly consenting to his son's marriage with poor little Fanny, being (this is a strong expression for our author) "sick of ambition and mercenary connections." Jane was no reformer: she took society as she found it and laughed at it; that does not necessarily imply that she shared its opinions—and it may be added, that its alleged opinions were probably not so widespread as is supposed, decent people being as common then as they are now. She liked her heroines to marry money; so do all writers of non-tragic fiction; it is what we all wish for our friends, that they should find the Fairy Prince. But she never lost her sense of proportion about money: her critics on this point are absurd.

Who was she to change society? On the whole she liked it, and in so far as she did not she found it comic. There was pleasure in observing the foibles of types and of individuals: in a general way she recorded faithfully and without undue malice. The one bone of contention is Mr. Collins. It is certain that no man ever created began a proposal with:

My reasons for marrying are, first, that I think it a right thing for every clergyman in easy circumstances (like myself) to set the example of matrimony in his parish; secondly, that I am convinced it will add very greatly to my happiness; and, thirdly, which perhaps I ought to have mentioned earlier, that it is the particular advice and recommendation of the very noble lady whom I have the honour of calling patroness.

Nobody ever talked like that. At the same time it must be allowed that a Collins's private motives would be "as described," and that the smoothness of the speech should be allowed—dialogue in all good authors being subdued to the style of the authors and not precisely copied from words as spoken by ordinary people. "Mr. Collins was not a sensible man" is a comment that almost cancels out the exaggeration by understatement. His speeches may be a little overdone (though the reader could not wish them otherwise, and he is not so overdone as the adorable Chadband in Dickens), but the others in *Pride and Prejudice* are not. Dialogue like this between Mr. and Mrs. Bennet could be put straight on the stage without a word of alteration—Mrs. Bennet is lamenting over the fact that the egregious Collins has become the fiancé of Miss Lucas instead of getting engaged to one of her own daughters:

"Indeed, Mr. Bennet," said she, "it is very hard to think that Charlotte Lucas should ever be mistress of this house, that I should be forced

to make way for her, and live to see her take my place in it!"

"My dear, do not give way to such gloomy thoughts. Let us hope for better things. Let us flatter ourselves that I may be the survivor."

This was not very consoling to Mrs. Bennet; and therefore, instead of making any answer, she went on as before.

"I cannot bear to think that they should have all this estate. If it were not for the entail, I should not mind it."

"What should you not mind?"

"I should not mind anything at all."

"Let us be thankful that you are preserved from a state of such insensibility."

Bennet here speaks for Miss Austen: he is not, though a comfortable man, not quite so serious about property as the rest of them; and he can only cope with a fool, even though the fool be his wife, by means of quiet leg-pulling remarks which amuse himself and are unperceived by the other side.

Those are two of the best characters in all the novels. It is not true to say that they are drawn in the round: a great deal is left out. But at least what is not exhibited may be deduced: we may, from what we are shown, construct for ourselves pictures of Mr. Bennet reading in his library and talking to his few sympathetic friends; and even pictures of a younger Bennet who fell in love with the pretty fool who afterwards turned into the Mrs. Bennet whom we know. There was no space for more, and the pro-



foundest agonies and exultations of the hundreds not our novelist's concern. She painted for us the soul of individuals, quiet and voluble, in such a manner that we can imagine for ourselves all those parts of their lives which she did not show us. And she drew at least two characters at full length, those of Elizabeth and Emma. Elizabeth, most lovable and intelligent of all heroines, was her own best self; Emma was her own worst self, but the worst is not very bad. Each has had her generations of lovers and will have. For these novels must last as long as the language, being true to abiding human nature, most delicate in their drawing of the fleeting surface of a society, dexterously constructed, and phrased in an English which must be the envy of all who wish to write our tongue at once lucidly, concisely and musically. Her art was so excellent that her greatest admirers from Scott and Macaulay to Mr. Kipling have always been artists themselves; though the "Janeites" include also many of those modern Janes to whom we have already alluded, and who make so little noise in the world. Nobody who likes Jane Austen can be wholly bad or wholly stupid.

I AM not prepared with any philosophic justification for this essay. Poetry is poetry, whoever writes it. But it is a fact, at least so far as my observation goes, that people do feel curiosity about women's contributions to the arts, and that this curiosity is common to all kinds of persons, from those who exaggerate the differences between the sexes to those who seem to think they can eradicate them. I myself felt this curiosity when I conceived a selection: and it would be stupid not to admit it.

It was not the first collection of the sort that had been made, but so far as I am aware it had only one predecessor which can be taken seriously and that is over a hundred years old. The principal collections which have come to my notice may be briefly recorded in chronological order.

(1) *Poems by Eminent Ladies*, published in two volumes in 1755 and said to have been edited by Colman and Bonnel Thornton. The preface opens: "These volumes are perhaps the most solid compliment that can possibly be paid the Fair Sex. They are a standing proof that great abilities are not confined to the men, and that genius often glows with equal

warmth, and perhaps with more delicacy, in the breast of a female." The intention was generous, but the "standing proof" does not stand on these volumes. No research had been done for them, and the eighteen ladies represented in them were mainly bad poetesses of the time. A reprint, with additions, appeared in 1780.

(2) *Specimens of British Poetesses, Selected and Chronologically Arranged by the Rev. Alexander Dyce* (1827), was the earliest product of the right happy and copious industry of that learned man. It is the only book in the list with any pretensions to scholarship, and any man who follows in Dyce's footsteps must be struck both by the range of his research and the judicious manner in which he chose his extracts from the books he found. His work is not beyond criticism. There were poetesses, earlier than himself, whom he missed, of whom Lady Nairne is an outstanding example. He was rather too eager to get in something by any Female versifier whom he discovered, and distinctly over-generous to his own contemporaries. Moreover he gave feminine authorship the benefit of the doubt when the doubt in its favour was very slender. His evidence for the attribution of "Defiled is myname full sore" to Anne Boleyn was remarkably slight. There is not much more for the ascription of the celebrated sporting treatises to Juliana Berners. Neither of these reputed poetesses

appears in my selection, for the simple reason that I do not believe in them. Even on his own ground Dyce might have been surpassed by somebody standing on Dyce's shoulders. But had his work been perfect, a hundred years, which have seen the prime of the three greatest of English poetesses, have passed since he published it. I may at this point acknowledge my debt to him, although the poems I have taken from him are very few.

(3) *The Female Poets of Great Britain, chronologically arranged with copious selections and critical remarks* by Frederic Rowton, 1848. To this volume, large as it is, no such debt will be acknowledged. Mr. Rowton, on his title-page, claims the authorship of other works entitled *The Debater* and *Capital Punishment Reviewed*; if literary piracy were treated as maritime piracy is, one could understand his interest in the death penalty. He was a thief, a hypocrite, a most oily and prolix driveller: a bad specimen of what a modern polemist has called "the louse on the locks of literature." This heat against a man long dead may seem excessive; but after all one could not say so much if he were still alive, and his brazenness has probably never been noticed before. Listen to his Preface. "Of our *male* Poets there are (to say the least of it) histories enough. Johnson, Campbell, Aikin, Anderson, Southey, and others, have done due honour to the genius of the rougher sex; and have left us—so far as

they have gone—nothing to be desired. But where are the memorials of the Female mind? . . . One or two small works (among which Mr. Dyce's *Specimens of British Poetesses* is the only one of merit and research) have been devoted to this subject, it is true; but even the worthiest of these productions is at best but incomplete. It cannot surely be pretended that this neglect of our Female Poets is attributable to any lack of genius in the sex. In these enlightened days it may certainly be taken for granted that women have souls . . . we should be deeply ashamed of ourselves for so long withholding from them that prominent place in the world's esteem which is so undoubtedly their due." What a Chadband! We have here the very accents of that speech about the beasts of the field, and the human boy.—"Are you a bird of the air? No!" "That prominent place in the world's esteem!" One might imagine he was talking about some obscure and unnoticed tribe of the brute creation: badgers, perhaps, or Dartford warblers. He was for the first time calling the attention of the human race to the existence of women, which could only be demonstrated, apparently, by putting their works into anthologies. But the most notable thing is that like all his kind he was not only a humbug but a sly robber. That patronizing parenthesis about Dyce, without a word of acknowledgment, is the one reference in his preface to a man on whose labours

he battened. Half his book—it might be very well if he admitted it, for Dyce was competent—came bodily out of Dyce. That was the only part of it worth printing. Dyce did all his research for him; the rest of his huge book was filled with the maundering prettinesses of early nineteenth-century writers. His notes on the old poetesses are Dyce's rewritten, often not even that; that he was conscious of his dishonest intent is proved by the way in which here and there, without any sensible reason, he changes with obtuse cunning the order of the transcribed extracts. He had not even the sense to see that at one place he copied from Dyce a highly ridiculous misprint!

If his earlier notes are certainly pilfered, his later are as certainly his own. Pages of gush are devoted to the numerous geniuses of his time. Of Mrs. Margaret Hodson he says that "Her narratives flow as gracefully and smoothly as Scott's: she closely resembles that great writer, indeed, in many respects, although as regards dramatic skill she is certainly superior. . . . One cannot but feel surprised that a lady of our peaceful age should be so thoroughly imbued with the martial spirit of our warlike ancestors. The fact proves not merely the strength of the human imagination, but also that the imagination is not sexual." Of Mary Howitt he says that "As a versifier, as a moralist, and as a philosopher, she may safely challenge comparison with any writer of her own sex and with

most of the writers of the other sex. . . . Mrs. Howitt is indeed a writer of whom England may be, and will be, eternally proud." "There is in Miss Cook," he says, "that fine eloquence which grows as it advances." But I may be deemed to have celebrated sufficiently the character of this man and I come to the next.

(4) *Women's Voices* by Mrs. William Sharp, 1887. This is an equally bad compilation in its way, happily a different way. Mrs. Sharp says, "There has not, so far as I am aware, been any anthology formed with definite aim to represent each of our women-poets by one or more essentially characteristic poems." She may have been unacquainted with Dyce: at all events she left out half of his most interesting things. Her book, terribly dedicated "To all women," looks like a feminist manifesto: it is even more than Rowton's crowded with the ephemeral productions of contemporaries. They were only, many of them, of the 'eighties; but they have faded now.

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Possibly there are ephemerides in my volume also. But I have done my best to keep them out. My criteria may be briefly explained. From the moderns I have taken only poems which appear to me meritorious; but in the earlier portion of the work there will be found some poems put in merely as curiosities

or because they are the best representatives of their time that can be found. I have left out a great many of Dyce's poetesses. I could not bring myself to print Diana Primrose, in spite of her lovely name, or the monstrously ingenious Mary Fage, of the seventeenth century though she was. But I may say quite frankly that if I had come across, say, a poem of Chaucer's day indisputably by a woman it would have gone in even though it were the weakest doggerel. But I know nothing as early as that. Professor Gollancz, I believe, thought *Pearl* was by a woman; perhaps it was, but we don't know. I have omitted, as I said, verse imputed to Juliana Berners and Anne Boleyn. By the same token I have left out *Hardy-Knute*, which may or may not have been by Lady Wardlaw. I do not think it a great loss, for it is long and does not live up to its opening. *There's nae luck* would have gone in had I really felt sure that Jean Adams was a likelier author than Mickle. I should have been glad to have included the beautiful lines attributed to James I's noble and unfortunate daughter, Elizabeth of Bohemia, if I had seen satisfactory evidence for the attribution. Mrs. Tighe's long *Psyche*, a poem of respectable accomplishment, I searched for quotable extracts, finding none; her poem about a lily I rejected after hesitation. I found myself reluctantly disinclined to include anything by Margaret Fuller or George Eliot. Beyond these and



a few moderns I do not believe that I had much hesitation.

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There will be found in my selection some authors and some poems which have appeared in no previous anthology of any kind, so far as I know; one or two authors never known, and many who have been forgotten since Dyce dug them up. In all but a very few instances I have procured and searched the original volumes even when I have ultimately selected poems which previous anthologists have chosen before me. They do not always, be it understood, choose the worst and leave the best for other people. But good work is not the only thing to which interest attaches, and while looking for poetesses I have come across many odd things. I may be permitted, while the night is still young, so to speak, to make a few stray remarks about some of them.

There never was a time, whatever Mr. Rowton may have supposed, when the Female Sex entirely escaped notice, or even "esteem." But there was a time when it took no active share in literature. Today we scarcely bother about the distinction between men and women writers. With thousands of women writing, with women's verses in every magazine and women reporters in every newspaper office, when literary women congregate in clubs, and robust women novelists haggle with editors and discuss royalties with

their male rivals, we take composition for granted as a feminine occupation. Even though we may not expect it we should be only mildly surprised if a female excelling all her grandmothers were to appear, and a second of the sort would cause no surprise at all. But it has all occurred very rapidly; it is less than a hundred years since Southey wrote to Charlotte Brontë: "Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be." Before the days of Fanny Burney and Jane Austen the woman writer was a lonely figure, however different may have been the ways in which various generations regarded her. One looks back through the centuries and sees these poetesses scattered about in ones and twos, fine ladies, quiet countrywomen with taste and education, blue stockings, pet prodigies brought up in literary circles, stupid women vain of their accomplishments, timid women apologizing for their temerity; almost all of them inevitably and pathetically self-conscious about the opinion of the watching males around them. Nevertheless the degree of that self-consciousness seems to have varied. There was very little poetry—though we do not know about many beautiful Elizabethan poems—by women in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. One of them speaks to us direct on the subject: Mary Oxlie of Morpet, who wrote a dedicatory poem to her fellow-countryman Drummond of Hawthornden:

Perfection in a woman's work is rare;  
 From an untroubled mind should verses flow;  
 My discontents make mine too muddy show;  
 And hoarse encumbrances of household care,  
 Where these remain the Muses ne'er repair.

But it did not, I think, occur to many early poetesses to apologize for writing or appeal for masculine mercy. Those who did write, of course, were plainly aristocrats, and whatever the standards of the rest of the population there has always been a good deal of democracy within the aristocracy, and an element of high culture amongst aristocratic women. Even in the eighteenth century, one of Horace Walpole's lady friends might not have apologized for writing verses as humbler contemporaries of his felt impelled to do. But after the Commonwealth we do commonly find apologies or protestations in text or preface.

The authorized folio of Katherine Philips (Orinda) is very enlightening. I have some doubts as to the literary modesty of Orinda: one sees behind her poems a bouncing gushing creature of the kind not usually content to hide their lights under bushels. But she protests enough. The standard edition was published posthumously; there had been in her lifetime a pirated book full of errors which she vehemently repudiated:

"The injury done me by that Publisher and Printer," she wrote, "exceeds all the troubles that I remember I ever had . . . it is impossible for malice itself to have printed those Rimes (you

tell me gotten abroad so impudently) with so much abuse to the things, as the very publication of them at all, though they had been never so correct, had been to me." She was "that unfortunate person that cannot so much as think in private, that must have my imaginations rifled and exposed to play the Mountebanks, and dance upon the ropes to entertain all the rabble; to undergo all the raillery of the Wits, and all the severity of the Wise, and to be the sport of some that can, and some that cannot read a Verse . . . it hath cost me a sharp fit of sickness since I heard it . . . a thousand pounds to have bought my permission for their being printed should not have obtained it."

"Sometimes," she says, "I think that employment so far above my reach and unfit for my sex, that I am going to resolve against it for ever," but "the truth is, I have an incorrigible inclination to that folly of riming, and, intending the effects of that humour, only for my own amusement in my own life." Her editor, however, was proud to publish them: "Some of them would be no disgrace to the name of any Man that amongst us is most esteemed for his excellency in this kind, and there are none that may not pass with favour, when it is remembered that they fell hastily from the pen but of a Woman. We might well have called her the English Sappho." She would, he says, have been persuaded to publish a correct impression of herself:

But the small Pox, that malicious disease (as knowing how little she would have been concern'd for her handsomeness, when at the best) was not satisfied to be as injurious a Printer of her face, as the other had been of her poems, but treated her with a more fatal cruelty than the Stationer had them; for though he to her most sensible affliction surreptitiously possessed himself of a false Copy, and sent those children of her Fancy into the World, so martyred, that they were more unlike themselves than she could have been made had she escaped; that murtherous Tyrant, with greater barbarity seized unexpetedly upon her, the fine Original, and to the much greater affliction of the world, violently tore her out of it, and hurried her untimely to her grave, upon the 22nd of June 1664, she being then but 31 (34) years of age. But he could not bury her in oblivion, for this monument which she erected for herself, will for ever make her to be honoured as the honour of her Sex, the emulation of ours, and the admiration of both.

Comment on the beauties of this last paragraph is beyond me. The commendatory poems prefaced to Orinda's works echo these lofty strains. Lord Orrery wrote:

And as Our Sex resigns to Yours the due,  
So all of your bright Sex must yield to you.

Lord Roscommon pictured himself surrounded by lions on some Lybian plain:

The Magick of Orinda's name,  
Not only can their fierceness tame,  
But, if that mighty word I once rehearse,  
They seem submissively to roar in Verse.

A pseudonymous lady, more vehement than her subject, argued that environment (she didn't know the word) made all the difference between the sexes:

Trained up to Arms, we Amazons have been,  
And Spartan Virgins strong as Spartan Men:  
Breed Women but as Men, and they are these;  
Whilst Sybarit Men are Women by their eyes.

. . . . .

Nature to Females freely doth impart  
That, which the Males usurp, a stout, bold heart;  
Thus hunters female Beasts fear to assail  
And female Hawks more mettal'd than the male.

This feminine anticipation of Mr. Kipling is followed by the assertion that since souls were equal it was obviously not the "he" or "she" that wrote poetry.

It is a fine collection of tributes. A poem, with noble passages, by the neglected Flatman comes into it, and there are two interesting Odes by Cowley. One begins:

We allow'd you beauty, and we did submit  
To all the tyrannies of it.  
Ah cruel Sex! will you depose us too in Wit?

The other, full of the oddest tropes, states that:

The World did never but two Women know  
Who, one by fraud, the other by wit did rise  
To the two tops of Spiritual dignities;  
One Female Pope of old, one Female Poet now.

The panegyric was impressive; but it was all some-

what patronizing, addressed as though to a flying pig. There is an air of strain about Orinda's nearest contemporary rival. The gifted Anne Killigrew, who, dying young, was the subject of a great ode by Dryden, had to write a long poem protesting against the "saying that her verses were made by another":

Like Æsop's painted jay, I seem'd to all,  
Adorn'd in plumes, I not my own could call.

She produced Orinda as evidence that women could be good poets, and she said quaintly of Alexander the Great:

Nor will it from his Conquests derogate,  
A Female Pen his Acts did celebrate.

There is nothing diffident about the attitude of Aphra Behn, the tough, the audacious, fearless young widow who forced her way to dramatic success under the Restoration, and who was the first of our professional women writers. She has been rather unfairly treated by historians. It is true that her plays are as gross, in subject and speech, as any of her time: possibly her coarseness was the defect of the quality which enabled her to fight her lone hand in the Grub Street of the day. But there is a hearty straightforwardness about her which is lacking in some of the men of the Restoration, she had a gift for broad, strong characterization, she was honest, rough, kind, affectionate, not at all cynical and she wrote English of an Elizabethan

lustiness. She did not apologize, she counter-attacked. She was not allowed to forget her sex but she soundly thumped those who reminded her that her plays and poems were "writ by a woman." Here is a passage from the *Epistle to the Reader* which introduces *The Dutch Lover*:

Indeed that day 'twas acted first, there comes me into the Pit, a long lither, phlegmatick, white, ill-favour'd wretched Fop, an officer in Masquerade, newly transported with a Scarf and Feather out of France, a sorry Animal that has nought else to shield it from the uttermost contempt of all Mankind, but that respect which we afford to Rats and Toads, which though we do not well allow to live, yet when considered as parts of God's creation, we make honourable mention of them. A thing, Reader—but no more of such a Smelt: This thing, I tell ye, opening that which serves it for a mouth, out issued such a noise as this to those that sate about it, that they were to expect a usefull Play, God damn him, for it was a woman's. . . . I would not for a world be taken arguing with such a propertie as this; but if I thought there were a man of such tolerable parts, who could upon mature deliberation distinguish well his right hand from his left, and justly state the difference between the number of sixteen and two, yet had this prejudice upon him; I would take a little pains to make him know how much he errs. For waving the examination why women having equal education with men, were not as capable of knowledge, of whatsoever sort as well as they: I'll only say as I have



to such and before, that Plays have no great room for that which is men's great advantage over women, that is Learning; we all know that the immortal Shakespeare's Plays (who was not guilty of much more of this than often falls to women's share) have better pleased the World than Johnson's works, though by the way 'tis said the Benjamin was no such Rabbi neither, for I am informed that his Learning was but Grammar high (sufficient indeed to rob poor Sallust of his best orations); and it hath been observ'd that they are apt to admire him most confoundedly who have just such a scantling of it as he had. . . . Then for their musty rules of Unity, and God knows what besides, if they meant anything, they are enough intelligible and as practicable by a woman.

This was in 1673. Forty years afterwards we get a sidelight from the preface to Mary Monk's poems, written after her death by her father Lord Molesworth. The preface takes the form of a dedication (fifty pages) to Carolina, Princess of Wales, who is greeted with this ambiguous salutation: "The true value, you have for Liberty, is so remarkable, that one wou'd wonder where your Royal Highness (who has been bred up in a part of Europe, but slenderly furnish'd with just notions of that great Blessing) cou'd have acquired it." Lord Molesworth repeats with approval charges recently made against women—this was two hundred years ago and on the verge of the eighteenth century!

That was the Natural Sweetness and Modesty which so well became their Sex, and so much recommended them to the Love and Esteem of the Men is (by many) exchanged for a Careless Indecent, Masculine Air (imitating) the Rakeish, Milder sort of Gentlemen in the Excess in Love of Gaming, Snuff-taking, Habit, and a Modish Neglect of their husbands, Children and Families.

As for his daughter's verses, of the tone of which he is proud, he says affectingly:

We found most of them in her Scrittore after her death, written with her own Hand, little expecting, and as little desiring, the Publick shou'd have any Opportunity of either Applauding or Condemning them.

It might be possible to find some women writers of the age to whom Lord Molesworth's strictures might be held, in part, to apply: Mrs. Centlivre, De la Riviere Manly, and Lady Mary Montagu. But it gives us a shock to hear them applied to the generality of early Georgian women, and they certainly would not apply to the poetesses (with whom we are specially concerned) of the rest of the century. Most of them were extremely severe and models of propriety, proud to display what learning they really had, but studious to exhibit a decorous modesty about publication.

The first edition (1696) of the poems of Philomela (Mrs. Elizabeth Singer Rowe) was published pseudonymously: her "Name had been prefixed, had not her own modesty absolutely forbidden it." The preface

was written (from Harding's Rents) by Elizabeth Johnson, who stoutly defended her sex:

We are not unwilling to allow Mankind the Brutal Advantage of Strength, they are Superior to ours in Force, they have Custom on their side, and have Ruled, and are like to do so; and may freely do it without Disturbance or Envy; at least they should have none from us, if they could keep quiet among themselves. But when they would monopolize Sense too, when neither that, nor Learning, nor so much as Wit must be allow'd us, but all over-ruled by the Tyranny of the Prouder Sex; nay when some of them will not let us say our Souls are our own, but would persuade us we are no more Reasonable Creatures than themselves, or their Fellow-Animals; we then must ask their Pardons if we are not yet so Compleatly Passive as to bear all without so much as a Murmur: We complain, and think with Reason, that our Fundamental Constitutions are Destroyed; that here is a plain and open Design to render us mere Slaves, perfect Turkish Wives without Properties or Sense or Souls; and are forced to Protest against it, and Appeal to all the World, whether these are not notorious Violations on the Liberties of Freeborn Englishwomen? This makes the meekest Worm amongst us all, ready to turn again when we are thus trampled on; But alas! What can we do to Right ourselves? Stingless and Harmless as we are, we can only Kiss the Foot that hurts us. However, sometimes it pleases Heaven to raise up some Brighter Genius than ordinary to Succour a Distressed People; an Epaminondas in Thebes; a

Timolean for Corinth; (for you must know we read Plutarch, now he is translated) and a Nassau for all the World: Nor is our Defenceless Sex forgotten! we have not only Bonducas and Zenobias; but Saphos and Daciers; Schurmans, Orinda and Behns, who have humbled the most haughty of our Antagonists, and made them do Homage to our Wit as well as to our Beauty.

Forty years passed before her poems were reprinted by Curll with a note from the author desiring him "to own, that it's his Partiality to my Writings, not to my Vanity, which has occasioned the Republishing of them." Curll himself wrote the preface, telling the story of Mrs. Rowe's life and marriage in the strain of "Long had this Lady been the Wish and Hope of many desiring Swains." He addressed himself to Pope; said that Prior had raised Philomela; and quoted Dr. Watts as saying that "the Honour of Poetry is retrieved by such Writers, from the Scandal which has been cast upon it, by the Abuse of Verse to loose and profane Purposes." Philomela's diffident reserve was the common thing. Mary Jones, one of the best known, a friend of Dr. Johnson and author of verses respectably polished and pointed, prefaced her fat volume with the apologetic statement that her poems were "the product of pure nature only, and most of them wrote at a very early age." She had for long shrunk from publication out of respect for "them (her friends), the world and myself" and only

resorted to it at last (under the patronage of the Dutch Stadtholder) in order to raise money for an aged and indigent relative. She must have raised a good deal: her subscription list (Christopher Smart and Horace Walpole appear in it) is a huge one. Her opening lines are unpromising:

How much of paper's spoil'd, what floods of ink!  
And yet how few, how very few can think.

But the rest of the poem is amusing and explains her pretty well. Her reluctance to set out a dedication

With lies enough to make a lord asham'd!

was not shared by her contemporary Mary Masters, whose verses (alleged to have been corrected by Dr. Johnson) were dedicated to the Earl of Burlington. She prostrates herself in the most approved Grub Street mode. He is exalted; she lowly and untuneful:

Yet when a *British Peer* has deigned to shed  
His gen'rous favours on my worthless Head;  
Silent shall I receive the welcome Boon?

Boon indeed:

He spoke; he prais'd. I hearken'd with delight  
And found a strong Propensity to write.

The humility of the women authors and the implied condescension of the men were at their acutest during the eighteenth century. Poetesses, however, were far more numerous than before. There were (though

Scotswomen wrote some immortal songs) no very notable ones; and the spread of authorship did not greatly affect women of the upper classes. Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, was an exception; but her salutation to the Alps will certainly not be reprinted by me. The cultivated relatives of dons and clergymen, widows driven to a subscription for a living, elderly spinsters, aspiring housekeepers and governesses composed and published volumes of respectable couplets. Now and then a considerable financial success was made. Mrs. Barber, the pushing widow of a Dublin tradesman, published in 1733 a handsome, even luxurious quarto, which is still very common. The most noticeable thing in the book is the prefatory poem by Constantia Grierson: "To Mrs. Mary Barber, under the name of Sapphira, occasioned by the encouragement she met with in England to publish her poems by subscription."

Provincial ladies began to have volumes locally printed, and talent by poverty depressed was studiously unearthed. Mary Leapor, who had a strain of genius, was a domestic servant. Stephen Duck, the inspired Thresher, had his analogue, though not his equal, in Mrs. Yearsley, the Bristol Charwoman. This woman ought to be remembered for the most astounding apostrophe on record. She addressed a poem to the Bristol Channel in which she broke forth with

Hail! useful Channel. . . .

The phrase, unique as it is, was significant of the age. It might be used as a text for that prevailing (though, of course, not universal) complacency of the middle Georgians, who often seemed to regard the Universe as a laudably well-meaning branch of the lower orders, and were quite capable of "Hail, gamesome Thunder" and "Hail, pleasing Lightning." For prosiness and bathos Mrs. Yearsley was surpassed by another lady. This was Miss Jane Cave, whose *Poems on various Subjects, Entertaining, Elegiac and religious* were printed at Winchester in 1783, with a remarkable frontispiece showing the author quill in hand and wearing a sort of beribboned tea-cosy on top of a towering coiffure. Her volume is dedicated to the Subscribers: "Ye gen'rous patrons of a female muse." And with some reason. There were nearly two thousand of them, grouped by localities, "Oxford," "Southampton," "Bath," etc. She, or the family which employed her in some unnamed capacity, must have systematically scoured the South of England for victims. Her character was evidently forcible, if unattractive; but her powers did not justify her evident self-complacency. She was especially fond of writing obituary poems on deceased clergymen. Here are characteristic extracts from two of these:

Hark! how the Heav'nly Choir began to sing,  
A song of praise, when *Watkins* entered in.

Let ev'ry heart lift up a fervent pray'r,  
 That old Elijah's mantle may be there,  
 That God from age to age may carry on  
 The amazing work which *Harris* hath begun.

In her dedication she disclaims any pretension to be a "Seward, Steele, or Moore." The list is a sign of the times. Well-known poetesses now existed in large numbers, and as the century drew to a close their fame and the claims to eminence of the best of them steadily increased. There was Helen Maria Williams, whose *Ode on the Peace*, competently written but now unreadable, was highly praised by Dr. Johnson, and one of whose sonnets was committed to heart by Wordsworth. There was Elizabeth Carter, translator of Epictetus, and a blue-stocking whose learning really commanded respect. There was Charlotte Smith, the sonneteer, in whose writing we can still find the vigour and grace that made her celebrated in her own day. Anne Seward was equally well known. She did not deserve it. Occasionally there is a faint trace of reality in her work, as in the Sonnet on a December morning, 1782:

I love to rise ere gleams the tardy light,  
 Winter's pale dawn;—and as warm fires illume  
 And cheerful tapers shine around the room,  
 Thro' misty windows bend my morning sight,  
 Where, round the dusky lawn, the mansion white,  
 With shutters clos'd, peers faintly thro' the gloom,  
 That slow recedes;



But most of it is very bad; and I did not consider it necessary to attempt to revive her merely because she was once taken seriously. Mrs. Opie, wife of the painter and author of *The Blind Boy*, was another celebrity. Her *Lines Respectfully Inscribed to the Society for the Relief of Persons Imprisoned for Small Debts* are so characteristic of the time that I wish I had space for them.

There were others even better known. Something of the old strangeness still clung to the woman who wrote. Anne Sewald was the Swan of Lichfield and Susanna Blamire the Muse of Cumberland. But the age that produced poets and dramatists of the status and popularity of Mrs. Barbauld, Hannah More, and Joanna Baillie—the last a poetess of really considerable talent—was becoming reconciled. For a time the Mrs. Radcliffes might prefer to sign their works whilst the Jane Austens remained anonymous; but with the end of the epoch the old air of peculiarity faded, and with the century of the Romantic Rivival came an innumerable host of women writers of some distinction, and three poetesses with claims to rank with all but the greatest men. After Mrs. Browning, Christina Rossetti, and Emily Brontë we hear no more, and could hear no more, of a "Female Muse."

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That these three were greater poets than any

Englishwomen before them goes, I imagine, without saying. Almost all their best predecessors were women who live by one or two poems. Amongst those poems scarcely one is a genuine classic beyond the extraordinary group of great songs written in the eighteenth century by Scotswomen, who seemed to have led more independent lives than the Englishwomen of their time, and certainly sang more boldly, confidently, and musically: the *Werena my Heart's Licht* of Lady Grisel Baillie, Mrs. Cockburn's *The Flowers O' the Forest*, and Jane Elliot's, the stirring lilts of Isobel Pagan, the Ayrshire Publican, Lady Anne Barnard's *Auld Robin Gray*, and *The Land of the Leal* of Lady Nairne.

Until the age of Joanna Baillie, the Matchless Orinda had the greatest repute of them all, but there is more substantial achievements in the work of Lady Winchilsea. The Countess had no fame in her lifetime, she did not (as Orinda did) correspond with the literary men or exchange tributes with the poets of her time. But it was not for nothing that Wordsworth "discovered" and valued her. She kept her eye on Nature at a time when the world in general had a conventional *parti pris* about Nature, and an impressive power comes with her speech. This slight "difference" in her is not peculiar to her.

It may be left to others to discuss the particular aggregate value and characteristics of our women

poets, to debate the question as to whether the "masculine imagination" of Emily Brontë was a freak, to look for especially "feminine" characteristics in the contents of an anthology of women's verse. They are difficult and subtle questions. But I will call attention to one point, and one only: and that is rather to the credit of the poetesses. That they have, and must have, conformed to succeeding fashions in writing is obvious—the poetic style of an age is a fruit of its general civilization and way of thinking. But there is, I think, evidence that when the convention favours highly regularized speech and restricted choice of imagery, and when the convention favours a repression of personality, women seem to be less prone than men to complete conformity. Women from 1680 to 1750 may have written obediently in couplets or quatrains, but in those of them who have any merit, personal experience and personal passion are always peeping through, and the smooth surface of the stock diction is always being broken by an unexpected word, betraying obstinately individual taste and observation. Lady Winchilsea's cropping horse in the night has often been quoted. But we are equally surprised to encounter the hot passion, the straightforward confessions of suffering, the open autobiography that are exposed in the poems, however technically imperfect, of Ephelia and Lady Wharton. Mary Mollineux's verses (5th edition, 1761) were read, no doubt, by her

fellow-Quakers, for generations after her death, but have never, so far as I know, been noticed by any critic.

Mary Mollineux, the Quaker, died (under fifty) in 1695. She had suffered in prison, and her religious poems are the work of a woman who, although very learned, was primarily concerned with the feelings she was registering. Totally indifferent to the manner of the time, she was strongly under the influence of Donne. Mary Leapor and Mary Masters again illustrate the refusal of even the lesser women to remain on the highest levels of masculine stiffness. The detectives who are always chasing, farther and farther back, into the Augustan Age for "heralds of Naturalism," scraps of really fresh and enthusiastic description of Nature, could find things in both these poetesses. Mary Leapor (a domestic servant who died of measles at twenty-four after teaching herself to write some very polished verse) looked at Nature directly and keenly. A mere list of things she mentions (d. 1746) astonishes the reader accustomed, in the minor poets, to nothing more than groves, enamelled meads, bursting grapes, roses and lilies. If you turn Mary Leapor's pages you will find kingcups, goldfinches, linnets, thyme, shining cottage tables, primroses, damsons, poppies. . . . And how, in this passage of Mary Masters, a knowledge of and love for the country struggles with the hoops and corsets of the mode:

Here the green Wheat disposed in even Rows,  
 (A pleasing view) on genial Ridges grows,  
 Its clustered heads on lofty spires ascend,  
 And frequent with delightful wavings bend,  
 There younger Barley shoots a tender Blade,  
 And spreads a level plain with verdant shade,  
 The wreathing Pea extends its bloomy Pride,  
 And flow'ry Borders smile on either side.

She says, in terms, that whenever she looks at the country it produces an excitement in her which makes her write verse: unfortunately her intelligence was too weak, and only a few lines (not about Nature) were found pointed enough for a representative selection. But she had that touch of informality, and I think that even in the obscurest and worst women poets of the time will almost always be found—what in the men's work is only sometimes to be found—expressions of personal joy and grief, the healthy instinct to write about the things that the writer most intensely feels.

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There are a few problems to be cleared up on which I should be glad of light. The identity of Fanny Greville, whose *Indifference* is one of the most poignant lyrics of the eighteenth century, has always baffled historians. Who was Mrs. Taylor who appeared in Dryden's *Miscellany* and also in Mrs. Behn's *Miscellany* of 1683? Who was *Ephelia*, first given her due in a

charming essay by Mr. Gosse? There were two editions of her poems. The first of 1679 is complete, the edition of 1682 being padded out with poems, mostly good, by Rochester and others, including even *Come, Lasses and Lads*. A question of even more interest to me personally is, who was Ann Collins? and one of more interest still, where are Ann Collins's poems? Her *Song* I found in Dyce (I recommend the reader to refer to it, remembering its date) and the other poem I got out of a forgotten but good anthology of religious verse compiled by James Montgomery. Dyce refers to her *Divine Songs and Meditations* (1653). Lowndes's *Bibliographer's Manual* states that the copy of the first edition sold at the Sykes and Heber Sales a century ago was said to be unique; but he records also an edition of 1658. I can find no further information, and neither edition is in the British Museum. I should be glad of light on this and also on the other compositions of Mary Oxlie, the friend of Drummond of Hawthornden.

## THE DIARY OF A NOBODY

THE *Diary of a Nobody* originally appeared as a serial in *Punch*; and it was written by the two brothers Grossmith, of whom one was best known to the public as an actor and the other as an entertainer. No one ever thought of comparing them with Flaubert or Gissing, whom they very likely had not read, and the day of Tchekov had not yet arrived. Yet it is arguable that in point of mere realism of fiction they came as near to the truth as any of their more celebrated and more sombre contemporaries. It is true that their temperament gave their work a comic bias, as the temperament of most of the "realists" gave theirs a gloomy bias. But if any man really wants what the critics used to call "a slice of life" here it is.

Naturally, there are qualifications. Mr. Pooter is slightly exaggerated, as are some of his companions and an argumentative person with no sense of humour might well contest the above assertion by saying that Mr. Pooter would not even in a diary have so faithfully recorded his extremist simplicities and his worst humiliations. But, whatever discounts may have to be made, the fact remains, as it seems to me, that a

large area of English social life is painted in this book more faithfully and fully than anywhere else. Mr. Pooter does not beat his wife; nor do most Mr. Pooters. Mr. Cummings does not attempt to seduce her; nor would most of the Messrs. Cummings. Fifteen months pass without a murder or a divorce; there is no assault worse than the unpleasing trick played by Gowing when he made the whole party sit on the floor, no robbery worse than the abstraction of certain leaves from Mr. Pooter's diary, no debauch more reprehensible and disastrous than Mr. Pooter's excessive libations of champagne at the Lord Mayor's Ball. But fifteen normal months in a normal household would be equally free from extremes of human aberration and the worst malignities of Fate. It was the normal that our authors were depicting; they showed it in a comic light simply because they found it comic, thereby coming nearer the hearts and minds of the Pooters themselves than do those other realists of the "Dull Monotony" school who employ similar materials to exhibit a scene of utter tedium faithfully communicated to the reader.

The date is, shall we say, 1891; the site is Holloway, a typical suburb of the impecuniously respectable kind; the manners, customs and experiences shown are those of the poorer middle classes in a London suburb of the late Victorian age. There are no set descriptions: everything is done, as it naturally would be in a



diary, by an accumulation of little touches. We are given a picture of English social life, in a certain class, in a certain kind of place, and at a certain date. About the date the authors, doubtless, were not particular: they set down what were the facts when they wrote, and the mere lapse of time has given some of their details an historical value. The particular tone of the references to bicycling would in itself fix the date almost to a year: Cummings's paper on the superiority of the bicycle to the horse (but Lupin, who would now have a fast two-seater, preferred his smart little trap) and his lofty familiarity with the *Bicycling News* have the peculiar flavour of the 'nineties. There is something of the rose's beauty and transience about them now. Mrs. Cummings's songs, of which the most successful were *No, Sir* and the *Garden of Sleep* are also infallible indexes: a hundred years hence readers of the Diary will learn a good deal by looking up these two songs in the British Museum, unless by then that hospitable receptacle has burst its sides. "I bought a pair of stag's heads made of plaster-of-Paris and coloured brown": there is at once a record and a criticism; for amongst other things the Gros-smiths were admirably sound on æsthetics, lampooning bad architecture, bad music, and bad furniture with equal certainty. Those whose memories go back beyond 1914 will find an almost painful chasm about the reference to that quaint law—truly Victorian in its

compromise and the lies it led to—about bona-fide travellers who could get drink out-of-hours on Sunday by the simple expedient of saying that they had come three miles. The Pooters' house and the decorations—fans, painted stools, etc.—of that and other houses date most emphatically. The house "The Laurels" is drawn with ruthless power by Weedon: the square box covered with borrowed "features" out of scale with so modest a place; the stucco balustrade in front, the heavy steps to the porticoed front door, the weighty facings of the windows, the vast cornice with its unmeaning parapet atop, the puny shrubs in the front garden, the half-basement, the side door to the kitchen entrance, and behind all the telegraph-wires and train smoke of an industrialism which had invaded the country at haphazards. These things, alas! we have still with us, and in myriads: houses do not pass so rapidly as clothes, slang and people; but wherever we see such a house we know the period of it, it was built in the Pooters' lifetime. As diary and illustrations proceed we can almost define, though it is never mentioned, the precise smell of cooking that ascended from the Pooters' kitchen. The pictures of Pooter in the bath with the antiquated geyser, and of Pooter painting the washstand in the servant's bedroom, would alone tell us everything about his social status and habits. Weedon Grossmith had the gift, which is shared by Mr. George Morrow, of draw-

ing the commonest objects, jugs, railings, lamp-posts, gas-brackets, in such a way as to make them at once life-like, significant and funny. His pictures reinforce a story which was in no need of reinforcement: and a whole way of life is re-created for us. What we are told suggests infinitely more: a whole world of people, before the age of motor-cars and jazz, living in the drabber London suburbs, the grand people in the larger villas, the Pooters and the Cummingses in their plastered boxes, the tradesmen, the servants, the charwomen, the errand-boys. It is a mistake that no clergyman is introduced, but there is a wonderful tact about the intrusions of the larger and livelier world outside. The visits of Mr. Perkupp, the kind and prosperous master, of Mr. Franching, of Mrs. James, a suburban quick to take up the latest fashionable fad; the glimpses of the glories of the Mansion House and the Volunteer Ball; the large air of the cultivated and statesmanlike Mr. Hardfur Huttle: these excitements come in just their right proportions. And though we may smile, looking backward and downward, at the things which the Pooters take seriously, we know in our hearts that we share their passions, and that we also have our toys and their dreams, in essentials like theirs:

Carrie's mother returned the Lord Mayor's invitation, which was sent to her to look at, with apologies for having upset a glass of port over it. I was too angry to say anything.

The Lord Mayor may not be what he was in the 'nineties; and even in the 'nineties there were quarters where his lustre did not shine so brightly as it did in Brickfield terrace; but our laugh at the Pooters' little triumphs, vanities and ambitions is in some measure a laugh at our own. "He (the curate) wants me to take round the plate which I think a great compliment." The incident selected is selected with an exact eye to the effect, the delimitation of Mr. Pooter's sphere; but there again is a fact for the student of manners in ages to come, which is also a revelation of something to which neither time, place nor class makes any difference. "It only shows how small the world is," on the other hand, is something, perhaps, which could only have become a standard remark in the middle class: the upper class being too consciously small, and the working class too large.

There are many enormous solemn books of great reputation in which the characters are no more surely drawn than they are here. Pooter's is the one full-length portrait: we know enough of him to deduce from it what he would say and do in any given situation; and it is a particular triumph of the authors that, although they make him so superbly silly, they leave us with an admiration of his "sterling worth." The presentiments of the others range, in point of scale, downwards until we come to the laconic Mr. Padge, who never says anything but "That's right," in a tone

which makes us, as Mr. Belloc says, remember it all one's life. When has "economy of means" gone farther in the suggestion of character? "A vulgar-looking man," remarks the sober Mr. Pooter, "who appeared to be all moustache." He seized the most comfortable chair, blew out great clouds from his reeking pipe, and blandly contemplated the proceedings throughout the evening. The misadventure happened to Gowing:

I was so annoyed at the conduct of Padge, I said: "I suppose you would have laughed if he had poked Mr. Gowing's eye out?" to which Padge replied: "That's right," and laughed more than ever.

Next night:

Imagine my utter disgust when the man Padge actually came again, and not even accompanied by Gowing. I was exasperated and said: "Mr. Padge, this is a surprise." Dear Carrie, fearing unpleasantness said, "Oh! I suppose Mr. Padge has only come to see the other Irving make-up." Mr. Padge cried, "That's right," and took the best chair again, from which he never moved the whole evening.

He rounds it off by saying "That's right" when Mr. Pooter is told by Burwin-Fosselton, the gifted imitator to talk about what he understands. Weedon Gros-smith's drawings of him, wedged into the best chair, with his shaggy moustache, his flat bald head, his perpetual pipe, his podgy hand, his vacuous, expectant

face, perfectly develop the indications given. We know Padge; we can quite imagine him saying "That's right" when the malevolent Gowing said it would be quite the thing for him to present himself for an evening with the Pooters, who were total strangers to him; we are tempted to reconstruct his whole life, expedite Herculem and the ichthyosaurus from a bone; we feel sure that he has retired from business and is a widower with a married daughter, who doesn't in the least know how much father is worth.

His introduction was a characteristic action of Gowing's, a selfish man, fond of Pooter, fond also of pulling Pooter's leg. The game of Mogul was Gowing's extremest action; but he appeared to great advantage after the Pooters had attained the dizzy heights of the Mansion House Ball, when:

He entered the room, without knocking, with two hats on his head and holding the garden-rake in his hand, with Carrie's fur-tippet (which he had taken off the downstairs hall peg) round his neck, and announced himself in a loud coarse voice: "His Royal Highness the Lord Mayor!" He marched twice round the room like a buffoon, and finding we took no notice, said: "Hulloh! What's up? Lovers' quarrel, eh?"

That passage could not have been written without a very clear imaginative realization of all the characters concerned. In the creation of minor characters the authors' invention is inexhaustible: they are always

ready with a new one who is at once typical and yet strongly particularized. Lupin is a thousand "cards," yet he is Lupin. Mr. Cummings is a host of sedate bicycling—and rabbit-breeding, bowls-playing, gardening, stamp-collecting—pioneers, yet he is Mr. Cummings with his own individual neutral tint.

And if the individuals are truthfully drawn, truths are also conveyed which transcend the experiences and idiosyncrasies of individuals. Teddy Finsworth—who actually speaks almost as little as Mr. Padge—betrays a universal tendency when he meets Pooter again: "He insisted on my having a glass of wine (a thing I never do), and told me he lived at Middlesboro', where he was Deputy Town Clerk, a position which was as high as the Town Clerk of London—in fact higher." The conversation about Pooter's dreams is almost horribly real. It concludes:

Carrie, who had hitherto been quiet, said: "He tells me his stupid dreams every morning nearly." I replied: "Very well, dear, I promise you I will never tell you or anybody else another dream of mine, the longest day I live." Lupin replied, "Hear! Hear!" and helped himself to another glass of beer.

Everyman and Everywoman are engaged here. Take, again, the conversation with the table-rapping Mrs. James:

Mrs. James said she thought I was very unkind, and if people were all as prejudiced as I

was, there would never have been the electric telegraph or the telephone.

I said that was quite a different thing.

Mrs. James said sharply: "In what way, pray—in what way?"

I said, "In many ways."

Mrs. James said, "Well, mention *one* way."

I replied quickly: "Pardon me, Mrs. James, I decline to discuss the matter. I am not interested in it."

There is no burlesque in this; it happens, literally, a thousand times a day. The workings of Pooter's mind often have the same general applicability. After he has ruined Gowing's stick by enamelling it (an action particularly Pooterian) his entry is the entry any candid husband might make:

Purchased a new stick mounted with silver, which cost seven-and-sixpence (shall tell Carrie five shillings), and sent it round with a nice note to Gowing.

It is akin to the entry of a few days later:

Franching called at office and asked me to dine at his club, "The Constitutional." Fearing disagreeables at home after the tiff this morning, I sent a telegram to Carrie, telling her I was out to dine and she was not to sit up. Bought a little silver bangle for Carrie.

In passing it may be remarked that the selection of a club for Franching, who is so beautifully suggested both in text and illustration, shows that exquisite



sense of fitness, and that fastidious care for detail, which are characteristic of these authors, whose scrupulosity is equalled by few professional writers.

I begin to feel that I am in danger of loading a light book with a ponderous commentary; but if I have imputed to the authors qualities and aims to which they gave no thought, I have imputed nothing to them which they did not possess or achieve. The lasting and growing popularity of the book a generation after its appearance and years after the deaths of the authors, is due, I am convinced, in part to its value as a record of fact as well as to the humour of its characterization and invented incident. Commonly the two birds are killed with one stone. Take a typical entry of the sort of way in which the Pooter circle—such habits are not extinct, and can be paralleled in any class—would spend its evenings:

At supper young Mutlar did several amusing things. He took up a knife, and with the flat part of it played a tune on his cheek in a wonderful manner. He also gave an imitation of an old man with no teeth, smoking a big cigar. The way he kept dropping his cigar sent Carrie into fits.

That is nothing but a bare record of facts, in their order. They are funny because the human race is funny; we may find them additionally funny if in our time and circle the tricks are slightly different. Yet they are history. Some such record from ancient Greece would be cherished as an "illuminating docu-

ment''; and while we are laughing at the Pooters and their friends we are also fascinated by the verisimilitude, the stark, unannotated realism of the events of the dialogue. The Grossmiths held the mirror up to nature, and there was a comic face in the glass. The exaggerated burlesques of their era are dead; their own transcript from life appears destined to a perennial popularity amongst the discriminating.